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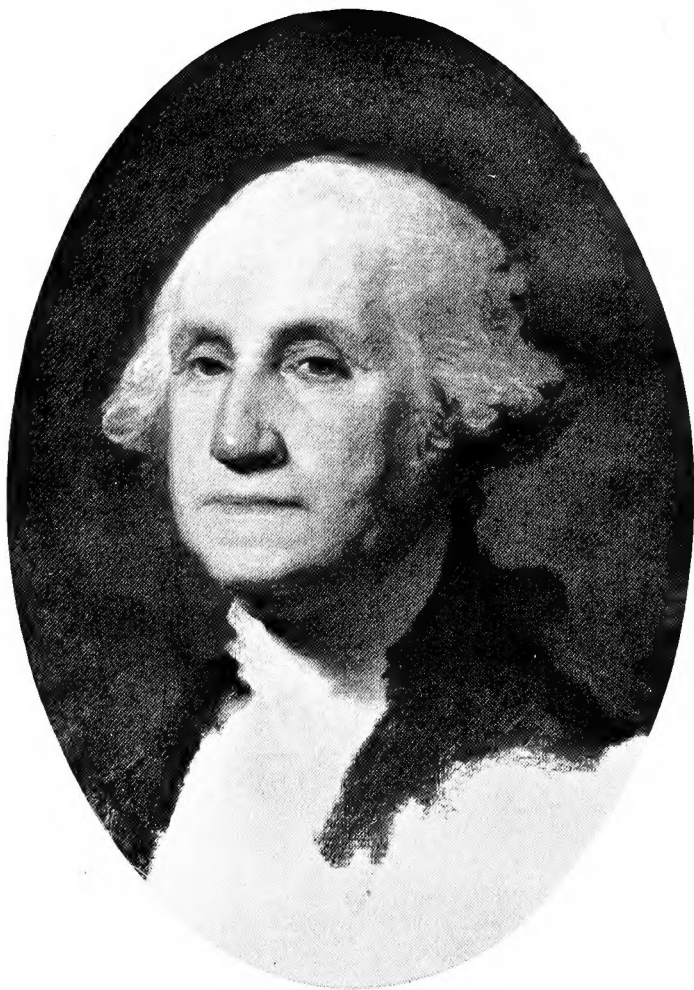
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# SOUTHERN STATESMEN

OF

## THE OLD RÉGIME

WASHINGTON, JEFFERSON,  
RANDOLPH, CALHOUN, STEPHENS, TOOMBS, AND  
JEFFERSON DAVIS

BY

WILLIAM P. TRENT, M.A.

PROFESSOR IN THE UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH,  
AUTHOR OF "WILLIAM GILMORE SIMMS," ETC.

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NEW YORK: 46 EAST 14TH STREET  
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TO  
THEODORE ROOSEVELT  
IN  
FRIENDSHIP AND ADMIRATION.



## PREFACE.

---

THE lectures which make up this volume were delivered before the University of Wisconsin, at Madison, in the months of February and March, 1896. The invitation to deliver them came through my friends, Professor Richard T. Ely, the editor of the series in which they now appear, and Professor Frederick J. Turner, of that institution. They formed part of a course of lectures on the general history of the South, which were delivered nominally to a class, but really to a large audience composed of representatives of the University and of the city of Madison, who extended to me a courtesy that I shall never forget, and a sympathetic interest which would have inspired a block of stone. If I may judge from the kindness of my own reception, Madison is a very paradise for lecturers; it is also one of the least sectional and biassed places that I have ever known. I must have said things that many of my auditors could not agree with; but from that noble old veteran,

General Lucius Fairchild (now, alas! no more), down to the youngest student, I did not encounter a single critic who was not as liberal and magnanimous as a true American ought to be.

Yet the generous reception accorded a lecture on its delivery is no excuse for its subsequent publication; and the reader has a perfect right to inquire why I have thought fit to make a volume of these lectures of mine. My answer is twofold. In the first place, I have relied upon the judgment of competent friends who heard them; in the second place, I think that my more or less popular treatment of my several themes may interest readers who would be repelled by formal histories and biographies. Every man who can be made to take interest in the great personages of his country's history is *ipso facto* rendered a better citizen; and so, if I have failed to throw a single ray of new light upon any of the statesmen I have discussed, but have nevertheless succeeded in treating the familiar facts in a fresh and engaging way, I shall feel that my labor was not wholly wasted, and that I did well both to deliver my lectures and to publish them.

Yet I would fain hope that I have not entirely failed to throw new light upon my subjects. I would fain hope that I have praised Washington with a bold enthusiasm that may prove contagious; that I have emphasized rightly Jefferson's cosmo-

politanism; that I have explained in a fresh way the hold Calhoun and his followers got upon the Southern mind; and that I have treated Jefferson Davis more fairly than most students of our history, even including many Southerners, have yet succeeded in doing.

If I deceive myself in these hopes, I must at least protest that I do not deceive myself as to the point of view from which I have endeavored to regard all the great men whose careers I have had to consider. I have regarded them from the point of view of an American who is at the same time a Southerner, proud enough of his section to admit its faults, and yet to proclaim its essential greatness. I have disdained to pander to a provincial sentimentalism that shivers at honest and fair criticism of any man or cause that may have become a shibboleth; but I have at the same time not consciously written about the leaders of my section a word that will by any right-minded person be construed into a servile acceptance of the adverse judgments passed upon some of them by outside and unfriendly critics.

My opinions are the results of my own studies, based chiefly upon Southern materials; and I am willing to change all or any of them, when they are proved to be erroneous, but I am certainly not to be turned from them by unstinted personal abuse. It is almost needless to add, except for

the benefit of certain hypersensitive portions of the Southern people, that I have not desired to wound the feelings of a single individual, or of my compatriots in general, by any criticisms that I have been compelled to pass upon the men and measures of the old *régime*.

I have now sufficiently explained the occasion for the writing and the publication of these lectures, and I have tried to characterize the spirit in which I composed them.

One other matter needs explanation, to wit, the choice I have made of the statesmen discussed. Many of the most distinguished Southern political leaders have no special treatment, and some are hardly mentioned by name. It was, indeed, my original intention to make the volume more truly representative by including lectures, or rather chapters, on Madison, Monroe, Marshall, and Yancey; but other work has intervened, and I have been compelled to publish only the original lectures as they were delivered in Madison.

With regard to my selection of subjects for them, I conceived that I had little choice. Washington must be taken, if only to show that to the South must belong the eternal honor of having given to the Union the greatest of all Americans. Jefferson must be included as the most influential of all our statesmen, and as having the most philosophical grasp and reach of mind.



John Randolph of Roanoke was not only a fascinating subject for a lecture, but also an indispensable connecting link between Jefferson and Calhoun, and a prototype of the extreme partisans represented by such men as Yancey and Henry A. Wise. Calhoun and Jefferson Davis were absolutely necessary, if only for the reason that they stood for the two States that led in the movement for secession, South Carolina and Mississippi. Stephens and Toombs were needed because they represented the important State of Georgia, but also because they were types of two great divisions of the Southern people, — those who shrank from secession, but at last went into the movement through external pressure; and those who held back for a while, but then rushed forward as impetuously as the original fire-eaters. Of these consistent fire-eaters I should have selected Yancey as the type, had I been able to add another lecture; but in so doing I should have somewhat belied my title, for the typical fire-eater has no claims to be considered a statesman.

Of the real statesmen omitted I chiefly regret the noblest of our jurists, Marshall; not that I fancy that I could have done him justice, but that I feel that he is not nearly so well known to the present generation of Southerners as he should be. It is a curious fact that there is hardly a line devoted to him in a school history which

has recently received the enthusiastic indorsement of all the honest but misguided people who are clamoring for a specifically Southern history. Yet, after Washington and Jefferson, is not his the greatest name that the South can point to? From first to last he upheld, not merely the dignity of the court over which he presided, but of the nation whose Chief Justice he was. His great intellect pierced through the metaphysical cobwebs spun around the Constitution by men who would have kept us from becoming a mighty nation in order that they might strengthen the power of sparsely settled States and of a decrepit and hurtful institution. He stood out for the national honor against the opposition of his State and of his section. He alone of all Virginians inherited the spirit and the balanced genius, and continued the traditions, of Washington. He was a statesman and a sage; and to have treated him, however imperfectly, would have been an inspiration to any lecturer.

Madison and Monroe I regret also, but not so deeply. The services of the former to his country were great, and should never be forgotten; but, after all, he is in many respects simply a follower of Jefferson, and a figure for whom I am able to feel little more enthusiasm than was displayed for him not long since by that brilliant but one-sided critic of our history, Mr. Goldwin Smith. The

Madison of the Constitutional Convention and of the *Federalist* is an admirable, though not a fascinating, subject for a lecturer; the Madison of the Virginia Resolutions ought to be a fit subject of eulogy for a casuist; the Madison of the White House I am content to leave to that disillusioned but great historian, Mr. Henry Adams.

Monroe, although he is distinctly inferior to Madison as a man, would make, I opine, an excellent topic for a lecture or essay. He will be more available, however, when his works are collected in a proper form. As it is, he is chiefly interesting because of the essential importance of his administrations, — which are a kind of half-way house in our history, — and as an early type of that curious product of American political life, the mediocre man elevated to power through the inability of a democracy to judge men and principles by much subtler tests than it applies to objects of art.

Jackson, Clay, and Benton, though Southerners by birth, had no place in my scheme because they came to stand for ideas distinctly Western. That able but mysteriously disappointing and disappointed man, William H. Crawford, I should under any circumstances have omitted for want of materials. Mason I have said a few words about in the lecture on Randolph. Of the minor Southern politicians I could say little, simply because

they were minor. A most interesting book, however, could be made up of them alone. In the heroic period of Southern politics, which, roughly speaking, goes down to the Missouri Compromise, one would have such noble men as Rutledge and the Pinckneys of South Carolina, and to take a very different type, the utterly unlovely but coarsely powerful Giles of Virginia. In the period of the Epigoni, one would have such interestingly decadent types as John Tyler and R. M. T. Hunter of Virginia, such mixed types of vigor and ineffectiveness as Legaré and McDuffie and Hayne of South Carolina, and such types of sheer obstreperousness as Governor Troup of Georgia. As for the fire-eaters, they would make several lurid chapters; but I am glad, on the whole, that I can dispense with writing the same.

In conclusion, I may remark that I have preserved the lecture form pure and simple, because to have changed it would require more time than I was able to spare, and would probably have resulted in no literary gain proportionate to the labor involved. A set essay, to have justified its pretensions, would, in the case of each statesman treated, have involved fresh study and greater library facilities than I can at present command. I have, therefore, contented myself with making some verbal changes and adding a few foot-notes; and I now commit the whole flotilla of tiny crafts,

along with this homely raft of a Preface, to whatever sort of sea Fortune may will that they shall find.

W. P. TRENT.

SEWANEE, TENNESSEE, *Nov.* 27, 1896.

NOTE. — It may be noted that all the lectures here published were subsequently delivered at Sewanee in the summer of 1896, and that the lecture on Washington was read before the Tennessee Historical Society at Nashville in May of the same year. No lecture has been published as a whole, but sentences and paragraphs have been incorporated in certain articles contributed to magazines. Every courtesy was extended to me by Mr. Scott, the librarian of the State of Virginia, and by Mr. Thwaites, who has the privilege of keeping the magnificent collections of the Wisconsin Historical Society. For careful attention to the proof-sheets during my absence abroad I am indebted both to Dr. Ely and to my colleague, Professor B. W. Wells.



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GEORGE WASHINGTON.



## GEORGE WASHINGTON.<sup>1</sup>

---

THE attempt to discuss in the short space of an hour so large a theme as the career of George Washington as a statesman might be justly characterized as impertinent, did I not hasten to explain the point of view from which I propose to consider my great subject. I have not the slightest intention of treating it in the manner of a minute specialist (which I am not) who is trying to add to your knowledge of facts. Neither have I the intention of trying to put familiar facts before you in a novel light. I am not sure that I wish, primarily, to make you know anything; but I am sure that I wish to make you feel something very deeply. If, however, I cannot succeed in making you feel that something after I have talked to you about it for an hour, it is obvious that, if I talked to you as long as a Scotch divine of the seventeenth century was in the habit of discoursing, I should not succeed in making you feel it, even

<sup>1</sup> I have relied chiefly on Lodge's "Washington" and on the "Works" edited by Sparks and Ford. It would be useless to enumerate all the sources from which I have drawn in this and in each succeeding chapter.

though you had the abounding patience of a Scotch congregation of that period.

Now, what I wish to make you feel is something rather rare in these *fin de siècle* times of ours, — a genuine, not affected or sentimental, admiration for a man whose achievements have become hackneyed. Genuine admiration is rare at any time, but it is most rare when its object is a person or thing that has long received the lip-service of mankind. Lip-service is not heart-service; and it is heart-service that is essential to true admiration.

There was a time when George Washington had the heart-service of the American people for his glorious defence and establishment of their liberties. I very much fear that a good deal of that heart-service has changed to lip-service; and I wish to show in this lecture that such a change in sentiment is unworthy of us, especially as it is usually found in people who make some pretensions to culture. My object, then, shall be to point out in broad lines those traits of Washington's character and career as a statesman that, in my judgment, prove his greatness and demand our gratitude; and in doing this I shall naturally be compelled to treat, though more briefly, his career and character as a man and a soldier, for he was great at home and on the field before he displayed his greatness in the cabinet. Yet before entering fully upon this task, it may be well to say a few words about

the popular inappreciation of Washington's greatness to which I have referred.

Mr. Henry Cabot Lodge, in the introduction to his admirable, I think I may say noble, "Life of Washington," has given a very good account of the various Washington myths that have come to pass current for the real man, who is so hard to know. He traces the solemn myth, the commonplace myth, and the priggish myth to the effect upon the great mass of unreasoning readers produced by the eulogies of Sparks and Everett, by biographies of other distinguished men of the Revolution, and by the farcical compilation of the notorious Parson Weems.

There is doubtless much truth in this account of the origin of these popular myths, but I think we must explore somewhat deeper if we would get at the whole truth. That the myth which represents Washington as a solemn, impeccable demi-god is largely due to the labors of the eulogists working on a well-known human tendency to magnify indiscriminatingly the men and events of the past, goes, indeed, without saying. But I fear that this demi-god myth is not very common nowadays. If you will collect the references made to Washington by our newspapers; if you will gather the opinions of your average friends and acquaintances about him; better still, if you will examine the typical schoolboy or college student

on the subject, — you will find, I am sure, that the commonplace and priggish myths — the idea that he was a rather ordinary or even goody-goody man made prominent by circumstances — are distressingly prevalent.

Now, why is this? I cannot believe that the books cited have done more than occasion the phenomenon; they certainly have not caused it. Marvellous legends grew up around the names of Alexander and Virgil and Charlemagne in the Middle Ages, some of which are ridiculous enough to our modern notions; but it is plain that they were not ridiculous to the people that framed them and accepted them; it is equally plain that those people would not have accepted them if they had been ridiculous. How is it, then, that in the full light of the nineteenth century so many representatives of a people that boast themselves to be in the forefront of civilization have gravely accepted the ridiculous stories that a silly old man chose to invent about the greatest figure of a great generation, or else have calmly assented to the still more ridiculous proposition, contradicted as it is by all historical experience, that a commonplace man headed and carried to success a tremendous revolution, and laid broad and deep the foundations of an empire? That he did these things, or was largely instrumental in their doing, no sane man can deny. Yet people still call Washington com-

monplace; and only the other day, while I was preparing this lecture, a lady entered the State library of Virginia and asked for Weems's book, saying she had been told that it was the best life of Washington to be had. How is this anomaly to be explained?

I have an explanation which I offer with diffidence and timidity, for it is not very flattering to any of us. The cause of much of the popular detraction and hollow lip-service which we must deplore in connection with Washington lies in that incapacity for discriminating appreciation of greatness and genius which is so characteristic of us Anglo-Saxons. We are, most of us, as Matthew Arnold has told us, inaccessible to ideas; but to the ideas of greatness and genius we are often positively impervious. I know, of course, that this is a charge that may be justly made against the whole human race; but, unless I am hopelessly pessimistic, it lies more especially and particularly at our own doors. We, that is, Englishmen and Americans, have produced men of action and of letters who have been without superiors, perhaps without equals, in the world's history; but we have frequently been slow to recognize them, we have very often appreciated them only partially, and we have time and again shared the reverence and affection which they alone have deserved, with men scarce worthy to unloose the lachets of their shoes.



The loyalists who shuddered when a weak king lost his head and his throne through his own folly were thoroughly callous to the grandeur of the sacrifice made by the infinitely greater Puritan poet when he incurred blindness rather than forego the defence of his country and his cause. There was some excuse for them; but what excuse is there for those thousands upon thousands of us moderns who still wax sentimental over Charles the First, but are utterly untouched by the grandeur, the sublimity, of Milton, whether as artist or as man?

What are we to say of ourselves when we remember that it was to the contemporaries of Tennyson and Browning that edition after edition was sold of Tupper's "Proverbial Philosophy;" that it was to the contemporaries of Burke that Wilkes appeared a hero, and to the contemporaries of Swift that Dr. Sacheverell was a great man? That we have ultimately come, if not to know the characters of our real heroes and statesmen and poets, at least to repeat their names, I cheerfully admit. I admit further that we have been far-sighted and hard-headed enough when it has been a question of resisting taxation; but I must contend that in the loyalty with which we have supported false causes and foolish measures, we have been nothing if not near-sighted and soft-headed. While we praise a de Montfort or a

Hampden, we must not forget the Jacobite gentlemen who drank to the wretched king over the water.

But we Anglo-Saxons are not entirely alone in our incapacity to estimate great men. The whole world does it gropingly and slowly. Alexander the Great, for example, has long been regarded as one of the world's greatest men; but not even after all these centuries have the majority of us formed any proper conception of his greatness as a constructive statesman. This is measurably true of Cæsar, from whom the lustre was borrowed that so long lighted up those two leaden figures, Cato the Younger, and Pompey, once called the Great. It is especially true of Alfred the Great, who is, I suspect, a mere name to most of us, — a name connected with a humorous story about some overdone cakes. There is, however, considerable excuse for our failure to put a proper estimate upon Alfred's greatness, because his greatness plainly consisted in a splendid equipoise of powers which, taken separately, would not have been supreme. In other words, his was the rare, perhaps the crowning, genius of balance, — a genius which in the sphere of poetry is illustrated by the splendid name of Sophocles; and it is to the men of his type that Washington indubitably belongs.

But we commonplace mortals are slow to appre-

ciate the genius of balance, or indeed any genius over much, and we Anglo-Saxons are entirely too prone to worship the average; hence, when any occasion presents itself for pulling a man of genius down to our own level, we avail ourselves of it. And so Weems's trivial book has served a fell purpose, its author building more foolishly, but at the same time more enduringly, than he knew; and the admirable lives by Marshall, Irving, and Lodge have not sufficed to counteract the evil done.

For it is an evil of the subtlest kind, it is a hurt done to the most vital part, when the memory of a great man ceases to fire a nation's youth, ceases to hearten its matured men, ceases to console for their half-accomplished labors its gray-headed and careworn veterans. That friend of Fletcher of Saltoun's uttered a pregnant truth when he said, in effect, "Give me the making of a people's ballads, and I will leave to others the making of their laws;" but he would, perhaps, have been even nearer the mark if he had said, "Let me determine what great men a people shall take to their hearts, what great exemplars they shall follow, and I will leave to others the making of their ballads and their laws."

We are all of us prone to worship and love: woe to us when we worship and love that which is mediocre, common, and unclean; woe to us, if

in less degree, when we worship and love that which, though high, is plainly not the highest; and woe to those foolish men who endeavor to detach a people from the worship of a worthy and noble man to whose memory they have given their allegiance.

National or world heroes and ideal men are not to be had for the asking, as those who coin silly jokes about the "Immortal George" seem to imagine. I should not like to believe, do not believe, that we Americans are an irreverent people; but I know that we do not take great things, great ideas, great men, seriously enough. Hence I was not indignant when, some years ago, Mr. Swinburne referred to Mr. Lowell's unpardonable attempt to be humorous about Milton's blindness, "as a hideous and Bæotian jest." Hideous and Bæotian are, it seems to me, exactly the epithets to apply to much that is said and written to-day in this country about Washington.

Rather than have you joke about him, rather than have you endeavor to pull him down from his lofty eminence, I would have you even emulate that erratic Englishman, Mr. Martin Farquhar Tupper, and write a drama with Washington represented as the old lover of Mary Arnold, the sister of Benedict, who, being affianced to Major André, tries to avenge his execution by rushing, like Charlotte Corday, to stab the Marat of the

American Revolution.<sup>1</sup> Yes, I would rather have you write such a drama, and make Patrick Henry call Washington "The Saul and the Musæus of our millions," than have you utter "a hideous and Bœotian jest" about him. If we are to speak of great men, let us do it worthily, in the tone and manner, if we can, of Wordsworth's sonnet on Milton which contains that grand verse, —

"Thy soul was like a star and dwelt apart."

But here, in leaving this phase of the subject, it is comfortable to remember and it is just to affirm that Mr. Lowell has spoken nobly of Washington in his ode entitled "Under the Old Elm."

To present even the barest outlines of Washington's life would be, of course, superfluous on this occasion, as you are all familiar with the main facts. The life of the boy on the Virginian plantation, of the young surveyor and soldier in the Western wilderness, of the aide-de-camp under Braddock, of the planter burgess, of the commander-in-chief, of the promoter of constitutional union, of the first President of these United States, has been told and retold for a century,

<sup>1</sup> "Washington, a Drama in Five Acts," by Martin F. Tupper, New York, 1876. This is a most remarkable production. See especially the speech in which Benjamin Franklin describes Washington's pedigree and coat-of-arms!

and will be told and retold as long as the world endures.

It is true that there are perhaps a few points in the story that will bear retelling and fresh comment; as, for example, the incident of his marriage and the utter folly of supposing that anybody but a romantic man could have made such an impetuous, love-at-first-sight step. His playing at cards, treating the ladies, love of hunting and racing, have been skilfully used by Mr. Lodge; but the latter's space was limited, and there is still room for some one to take Washington's letters and journals, and bring out for us their humane side. The utter lack of conceit in his account of his adventure with Gist on the ice-bound raft; the tender-heartedness displayed in the letter to Dinwiddie of April 22, 1756, in which he describes the sufferings of the people about Winchester; the manly straightforwardness of his proclamations to his soldiers from first to last; the fine scorn and sarcasm he could display on proper occasions, as, for example, when he commented on the conduct of Ensign Dennis McCarty; his ability to complain without being querulous, evidenced throughout his correspondence with Dinwiddie; his generosity in recommending merit in others; his humor, displayed in his letter to Mrs. Richard Stockton in reply to her poem on himself; his modesty; his considera-

tion for inferiors, instanced especially when he hastened up to Frederick on the news that small-pox had broken out in his negro quarters, — these and a hundred other points are waiting to be illustrated by the man who is to give us the ideal life of Washington.<sup>1</sup>

I shall be curious to see what this biographer will make of that inimitable note written to Mrs. Martha Custis on July 20, 1758, when the march to the Ohio had been begun.<sup>2</sup> But such matters are hardly germane to our present inquiry, for there have been great statesmen whose love-affairs have played no important part in their careers. What mainly concerns us is the question, What is there fascinating or supreme about the story of Washington's life?

According to some people, Washington was simply a Virginian country gentleman of very re-

<sup>1</sup> The letters referred to can be easily found by the use of the index to Ford's edition.

<sup>2</sup> This note is so good and so brief that it may be quoted entire: —

“We have begun our march for the Ohio. A courier is starting for Williamsburg, and I embrace the opportunity to send a few words to one whose life is now inseparable from mine. Since that happy hour when we made our pledges to each other, my thoughts have been continually going to you as another self. That an all-powerful Providence may keep us both in safety is the prayer of your ever faithful and affectionate friend.”

The reader may be also referred to the courtly letter to Mrs. George William Fairfax, in which Washington acknowledged his love for Mrs. Custis. (Ford, II. 95.)

spectable powers, who, having had experience in border-warfare, was, in the absence of competitors, put in command of a rather ragged and disreputable army of insurgent colonists, who were enabled to make their revolution a success mainly through the fact that their mother country was, for many reasons, unable to put forth her full force to quell her rebellious subjects. These same people go on to observe that it was Madison, Jay, Hamilton, Franklin, and Wilson who were chiefly instrumental in obtaining our Constitution for us; and that, when we needed a first President, Washington was chosen because he had been a successful commander-in-chief, and because he was that eminently safe man that the American people have always fancied whenever they have had any important office to bestow. Our critics further affirm that Washington's administrations were successful largely because of his policy of making use of the brains of two great leaders, Jefferson and Hamilton, and because in the end he allowed the views of the more constructive of these statesmen to prevail. They conclude their disillusioning analysis by declaring that, after all, Washington was not an American, but a colonial Englishman; and that if we latter-day "good Americans" want a *bona fide* hero of our own rearing to worship, we must descend the stream of time a space until we discern the great form



of Abraham Lincoln looming above its waters. Here, with unnecessary kindness — for who now denies Lincoln's greatness? — they tell us we may moor our barques in safety.<sup>1</sup>

Now, how is one to prove conclusively that this view is specious! It is as specious and absurd to the student of history as the theory that Bacon wrote Shakspeare's plays is to the student of literature; but how is this fact to be made clear to the popular apprehension? I fear that it cannot be made conclusively clear by any process, just as you cannot force a man to see that "Tom Jones" is a very great novel. If he says with the late Sidney Lanier, "I protest that I can read none of these books without feeling as if my soul had been in the rain, draggled, muddy, miserable," will you convince him of the narrowness, the banality, of his view by telling him that it frequently does a robust soul good to get a drenching, and that ultra-delicate souls are as little to be depended on in judging books as fever-patients are in judging the state of the thermometer? Will he not hug up his so-easily draggled soul, and shudder at you as for a rough, burly fellow, with

<sup>1</sup> It is probably little known that this idea of Washington not being a true American was combated in a "Life of George Washington in Latin Prose," by Francis Glass, A.M., of Ohio, which was issued in New York in 1835. Washington's life was also made a text-book for French classes by Professor A. N. Girault, U.S.N.

no delicacy of conscience or of taste? What are you to do with him but let him alone?

Just so, if a man, because he can perceive nothing startling or sensational in Washington's career, insist on believing that he was a more or less commonplace character, how is one to deal with such a man?

Will he be convinced that he is mistaken if you point out that no commonplace character could have taken the dignified stand that Washington took in the Braddock campaign with regard to the outranking commissions of the royal officers; that no commonplace youth could have acted with the fiery courage, yet cool deliberation, of Washington, on the day of the fatal ambush near Fort Duquesne? Because Washington, before the publication of Johnson's Dictionary, and even after, took liberties with the spelling of his native language such as every English gentleman of the period, including men of letters, was in the habit of taking, will an exacting critic cease to carry his nineteenth century ideas back into the eighteenth, and forbear to assert that Washington was an illiterate provincial? I fear not.

I am apprehensive, too, that he will see no conclusive proof of great generalship in the fact that not an important battle was fought in the whole Revolutionary War that cannot in some way be connected with the overseeing eye and planning

brain of Washington, though the latter might be hundreds of miles away — a claim which it would be difficult to make good for any of the generals engaged on either side in our Civil War. I fear, further, that he will see no supreme patience, tact, or patriotic firmness and clear-sightedness in the control exercised by Washington over a silly and bickering Congress — a control paralleled only by that exercised by Marlborough over an equally silly Parliament — a control certainly not exercised by any general on either side in our Civil War, not so much because the Congresses were less silly, or because two rather obstinate Presidents were in the field, as because the generals themselves were less masterful and great.

Now, I may as well confess that it is on the truths conveyed, as I believe, in the two last sentences, that I am willing to rest the claim not only that Washington is the greatest general and soldier that this country has produced, but that he is worthy to rank with the great generals and soldiers of all races and of all ages, with the Alexanders and Hannibals and Caesars, with the Cromwells and Marlboroughs and Napoleons. To many people this will seem, I doubt not, a foolish and extravagant claim, especially when I hasten to add that I know next to nothing of the science of war, that I never saw, and probably never shall see, a battle, that even in my historical studies

I skip military technicalities as often as I consistently can.

Yet, heretical as the statement may seem in this age of specialists, I am not inclined to think that ignorance of the details of warfare unfits me or any other man for forming an opinion on a matter in which imagination necessarily plays the most important *rôle*. The most minute study of plans of campaigns or battles will never suffice to enable any man to make a great general or soldier live and move before him; but, unless one does this, how futile must be the attempt to estimate such a hero's greatness. Imagination, and the judgment that looks to wholes rather than to parts, are, it seems to me, essential in any such estimate; and, while I am not going to be immodest enough to claim for myself any preponderating amount of these two requisites, I shall at least expect those who assail my conclusion as to Washington's greatness as a soldier, to be fairly certain that they excel me in these requisites. For, if I have any imagination or judgment, Washington was a supremely great general.

Not that he always won his battles, or won them in the most masterly way; not that he flamed like a comet in the heavens threatening desolation to the nations; not that he moved across the world's stage like a Karl or a Timour. His career does not enthrall us as does that of Alexander; it has

not such tragic elements of inspiration and pathos as has that of Hannibal; it does not leave us breathless with admiration as does that of Cæsar; it does not exalt us and horrify us as does that of Napoleon. But it does give us that supreme sense of satisfaction that flows from the perception of harmony and proportion; it does thrill us with the intense and elevated joy that must ever follow the spectacle of great powers consciously working for the successful accomplishment of divine justice; it does fascinate us by means of those elements of sublimity and pathos that are never absent from the contemplation of a lonely but serene elevation above the common tide of humanity.

I confess that I am glad to know that so supreme a master of the art of war as Frederick the Great pronounced Washington's Trenton campaign to be the most brilliant of the century, — the century, be it remembered, of Marlborough and of Frederick himself. But it is naturally no particular battle or campaign that rises instinctively before my untutored mind as a masterpiece of strategy. I think rather of the Berserker rashness and daring displayed at Fort Duquesne and at Monmouth, and I recall William the Conqueror at Hastings; I see Washington cross the Delaware, I see him at Valley Forge, and I recall Hannibal upon the Alps; I see him turn a ragged body of

suspicious New Englanders into trained soldiers ready to die for him, and I recall no less a man than Cæsar; I see him put down the Conway cabal, and reduce Congress to do his bidding, and I recall Marlborough; I see him quell Lee with his fiery eye and biting words, and I somehow recall Cromwell; I hear him later in life burst forth into grief and imprecation at the failure of St. Clair's expedition, and I recall Augustus Cæsar; I see him in his tent brooding over the treason of Arnold, and weighing the claims of mercy and of justice in the case of André, and I recall only his own imperial self.

All imagination, you will say, and I admit it frankly; but it is the only way I have, in my deplorable ignorance of military science, of arriving at any conception of the characters of Alexander or Cæsar or Napoleon; and I suspect that, if you will examine your minds carefully, you will find that your own views as to the greatness of these and of all other men have been arrived at in much the same way. A wide-looking judgment must, however, supplement the imagination in the use to which we have been putting it; but with regard to Washington's greatness as a general, judgment fails us no more than imagination. Surely the verdict of judgment must be that of imagination, when we consider the clear-sighted firmness with which Washington held ever before his eyes

a permanent break with England as the only end to be striven for; when we remember the dignity with which he accepted the aid of France without in any way compromising the honor of his country; when we perceive how thoroughly he coerced all opposition to his will; when, finally, we are convinced that every important feature of every campaign was planned and foreseen by his clear and patriotic mind.

If, now, any one objects that much that I have said about Washington as a general really applies to Washington as a statesman, I shall answer that I cannot quite comprehend how there can be such a monstrosity as a general of the first order, who does not also possess many of the characteristics of a statesman. But this leads us naturally to consider Washington in his more peaceful but equally supreme *rôle*, and brings us to the main topic of this lecture.

In some respects it seems harder to vindicate Washington's greatness as a statesman than it is to vindicate his greatness as a military commander. No Revolutionary general stood as near to him in ability as did the two statesmen, Jefferson and Hamilton. These two men and the ideas they represented have since divided the political allegiance of nearly all Americans; and the result is that their fame as statesmen has overshadowed that of their master—for he was their master.

It is, perhaps, natural enough that the man who is so narrow as to fancy that all political truth is bound up with the party to which he himself belongs, should extol the great leader from whom his party derives its principles, and should imagine either that Washington was a pliant tool in the hands of that leader, or else that he showed a certain amount of greatness in adopting the principles of that leader. It is hardly necessary for me to say that I take no such view of Washington as a statesman. Although he did not use pen or voice in the movement for constitutional union to the same extent as did Hamilton and Madison, his pen, his voice, his example, — his mere name, — were of more weight than all they wrote or said or did. His clear eye saw the defects of the union that was obtained; but his superb equipoise of judgment bade him, like Franklin, accept the result, and labor to strengthen and improve it. Not for him the rashness of Hamilton; not for him the yielding of Madison to the subtle, but often sophistical, influence of Jefferson; not for him the far-sighted obstinacy of a Henry, or the short-sighted obstinacy of a Hancock.

Compared with him, how the other figures of the period, even the greatest, shrink and diminish. The spiritual dignity of his altruism sits not upon Franklin; his breadth and catholic clarity of judgment belong neither to Hamilton nor to Jefferson,



—and who would think of comparing with him the Madisons, the Jays, the Morrisses, the Amesess, the Wilsons, of the time, able and patriotic men though they all were? Dignity, steadfastness, uprightness, serenity, benignity, wisdom, — these are the characteristics of Washington's statesmanship, whether we regard his firm policy of resistance to the insolence of revolutionary France, or his refusal to plunge his country into a second war with England, or his cordial acceptance of the financial measures of Hamilton, or his steady accentuation of the national principle, or his noble efforts to reconcile his cabinet, or his strong but humane policy towards the Indians, or his prompt crushing of the Whiskey Rebellion, or, finally, his progressive views on the subjects of slavery and of national education, and his prophetic comprehension of the importance of the West.

Study him, criticize him, as we will, he still remains supremely great. Even the figure of the great Frederick, resting from war to restore order and prosperity to his people, pales before that of this simple but lofty American.

There is only one figure of the period that shines in the sphere of statesmanship with anything like a similar lustre. That, it seems to me, is the sublime figure of the younger Pitt, resolutely pursuing his great purpose of opposing the recalcitrant strength of England to the madness of rev-

olutionary France and the insolence of Napoleon, making his country, whether she would or no, the bulwark of the world's freedom. Washington was not so situated as to be able to play this splendid part; yet had he been in Pitt's place, he would have played it. But being also a great general, he was greater than Pitt, greater, too, than Burke, with whose political wisdom he has so much in common; and when he died, there passed away from this earth the greatest spirit that had put on the vesture of humanity since Karl the Great.<sup>1</sup>

But what had prepared this man for his transcendent services to mankind? This is a question we must reckon with in these days of disbelief in special creations; for there are many persons who

<sup>1</sup> I cannot forbear to quote here these splendid words from Guizot's essay prefixed to Cornelis DeWitt's "*Histoire de Washington*:"—

"De tous les grands hommes, il a été le plus vertueux et le plus heureux. Dieu n'a point, en ce monde, de plus hautes faveurs à accorder."

And again:—

"Il fit les deux plus grandes choses qu'en politique il soit donné à l'homme de tenter. Il maintint, par la paix, l'indépendance de son pays, qu'il avait conquise par la guerre. Il fonda un gouvernement libre, au nom des principes d'ordre et en rétablissant leur empire."

(a) Of all great men he was the most noble and the most fortunate. God has no loftier favors to grant to any man in this world.

(b) He accomplished the two greatest things which in the field of politics it is ever given to man to essay. He maintained by peace his country's independence which he had won in the conquests of war. He established a free government in the name of the principles of order, and by placing them once more on a solid foundation.

are so imbued with the doctrine of evolution that they would be inclined to doubt the greatness of any particular act of Washington, or of all his acts combined, unless his training for the accomplishment of great deeds were previously made clear to them.

Now, from my own point of view, nothing is easier than to show that Washington had had precisely the training best calculated to make a statesman of the highest rank. He came of a race used to act and to command. From an early age he had to rely upon himself, and so was enabled to attain to that self-discipline which is indispensable to a statesman. Circumstances determined that he should learn the lessons of life from men rather than from books; thus he stood in no danger of becoming a doctrinaire. His early experiences as a surveyor, a backwoodsman, and a soldier gave him a true sympathy with democracy, and hence enabled him to understand the only rational principle on which a stable government could be founded in America; while his good birth and training, and his position as a planter-aristocrat, put him in touch with that English past from which it would have been impossible for the new nation to break entirely.

In other words, he was trained to become an American, not a French democrat, but a democrat capable of guiding himself and others with all the

firmness and confidence of a born aristocrat. Add to this the fact that his nature was essentially straightforward and manly; that he had not a conspicuous weakness; that his mind was clear and flexible, and, if not quick, certainly not slow; and, finally, that he had abounding physical strength, energy, courage, and ambition, — and you have a man who, in my judgment, was in 1789 better equipped for the career of a statesman than any man who had assumed the reins of power since Julius Cæsar crossed the Rubicon.<sup>1</sup> And he had put every one of these qualities into execution time and again before his country called him to guide its destinies.

His power to command men had been displayed on varying scales, from his first expedition against the French in 1753 to his defeat of Cornwallis in 1781. He had wrestled with men in office since his youth, — with Governor Dinwiddie, with the Virginia Burgesses, and with the Continental Congress. It was only because he knew how to deal with congresses and legislatures, with State governors and subordinate generals, that the Revolution was brought to a successful issue. The man who could manage the Continental Congress need

<sup>1</sup> There is a good passage at the close of Everett's "Life of Washington" in which he pertinently asks whether, with Washington's resources, Cæsar or Napoleon could have accomplished more.

fear no European cabinet; the man who put down the Conway cabal could put a curb on Jefferson and Hamilton. The man who had defied his tyrannical king, and extorted the grudging admiration of monarchical and semi-feudal Europe, was certainly the noblest figure that a nation could set in the forefront of its life and history; and this was what the people of these United States felt, dimly and vaguely perhaps, when they unanimously chose George Washington to be their first, as he is still their greatest President.

But the annotator of Washington's journals and letters need not deal in glittering generalities about these important matters. He can point you to the practical political sense and shrewdness displayed by Washington when he was a successful candidate for election to the House of Burgesses from Frederick County. If he can point to no orations delivered in that body, he can point to the Cromwellian speech in the Virginia Convention of 1774, when the planter-colonel offered to raise a thousand men, subsist them at his own expense, and march them to the relief of Boston. He can point to the letters written to Bryan Fairfax for clear proof of Washington's prescience as to the real nature of the coming struggle, and ask you to show him a single trace of the sentimental weakness that was characterizing so many of the leading men of America at the time, and that was to char-

acterize their descendants nearly a century afterwards at the outbreak of a still greater struggle. He can point to Washington's proclamations to his soldiers, beginning with his command at Winchester, and ask if Cæsar himself ever issued orders more concise, more strenuous, more elevating. He can point to letter after letter in which the need of a strong government, of a congress with power to do something, is emphasized as clearly and forcibly as in any letter in *The Federalist*. He can point to his clear-sightedness and fearlessness in using the word "nation" long before nine-tenths of the people saw that they were bound to become a nation, or desired to become one. He can point finally to that circular letter to the governors of all the States, written June 8, 1783, on the occasion of the disbanding the army, and maintain that, for directness and vigor of phrase, for patriotic purpose, for clear-sighted content, it is unsurpassed among the political documents of the world, in spite of the fact that Washington's fellow-citizens of Virginia commented captiously and harshly upon what they were pleased to call "the unsolicited obtrusion of his advice."

In fine, if no close student of our history can fail to perceive what a difficult task the American people were entering upon when they essayed the problem of self-government under the Constitution

of 1787, no close student of Washington's previous career can fail to perceive that he had been marked out by Providence as the only American under whose leadership success in that task was possible. But just here it will be necessary to say a few words about the special difficulties of the undertaking.

The notable impulse toward historical studies that has prevailed in this country during the past twenty years has naturally caused great attention to be devoted to the formative period of our constitutional history, with the result that much needed light has been thrown thereon. We have ceased to regard the Constitution as something miraculous and Minerva-like, and have learned that our government, like most other stable things on earth, was a matter of growth.<sup>1</sup> We have studied the various stages of this growth, and can flatter ourselves that the discoveries of the future will bring to light little that is new, or that can upset our conclusions.

On one point, however, we are still somewhat in the dark, which is natural, for it is a metaphysical point. Was the United States a nation from the moment the Congress of 1775 assembled, or from the moment when Lee surrendered at

<sup>1</sup> See, in this connection, the volume entitled "Essays in the Constitutional History of the United States," edited by Professor J. F. Jameson.

Appomattox? Various historical and political writers still discuss this question, and still give varying answers. It is metaphysical, but at the same time it has been exceedingly practical. It confronted the founders of our government, though not in the concrete form in which I have expressed it; and their failure to answer it decisively led to many of the most serious of the troubles that harassed Washington's administrations, and to the long train of evils that culminated in the Civil War.

This metaphysical question of the true nature of our government, and the moral question of the right or wrong of slavery, are the foci of the ellipse of our national history for the first century of our existence. Our early statesmen avoided an explicit answer to either question; and their successors followed them, down to Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis, who at length brought matters to an issue. For this unhappy state of affairs no one can be blamed. The English race has always been practical rather than metaphysical in its politics, and the French idealism that affected Jefferson and his followers did not play an important part in framing the Constitution.

French idealism was seen in the Declaration of Independence, and was soon to raise its head in the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions, and in



the doctrine of nullification; it sharpened the wits of the critics of the Constitution, but did not have great weight with the framers. This was fortunate. Even if the English ideals of Hamilton had prevailed in the Convention of 1787, or the local ideals of Patrick Henry had been paramount in the ratifying conventions, there is little room to doubt that the cause of union in America would have dried up like a gourd. The founders took the best course in sight, evaded the metaphysical question, and gave us a form of government which would inevitably develop the national idea among us.

Metaphysically speaking, we were a nation in 1775, and have never ceased to be one. Practically, it was only a few far-sighted men like Washington who recognized our national character. To the mass of Americans in 1789 we were a congeries of States; fifty years later the average Northerner had given up this view, while the average Southerner, on account of slavery, retained it. Now we are all, except a few recalcitrants, united in upholding the national idea.

I cannot here go into the reasons why the Americans of 1789 were largely anti-nationalists, save to say that they are partly historical, partly racial, that is, due to the peculiar constitution of the Anglo-Saxon mind. When that mind, transformed somewhat by its new environment, was

affected by French idealism, the genius of Jefferson (as I hope to show in my next lecture) made the idea of democracy potent both socially and politically, but unfortunately set it in unnecessary and unphilosophical antagonism to the idea of nationality. Jefferson was a cosmopolitan in spite of his localism in matters of detail; and his mind, unluckily for us, passed over the middle term between feudalism and cosmopolitanism, which is, of course, nationalism. *Hinc illæ lacrymæ!*

Washington, on the other hand, was no idealist. Living in the present, he recognized the value of the idea of democracy as well as of the idea of nationalism; and his practical good sense told him to utilize both ideas, as far as he safely could, in the policy of his new government. Hence he called both Jefferson and Hamilton to his counsels, strove while he might to keep them in harmony, and when he had to decide between them and their ideas, threw his weight to Hamilton and nationalism because he perceived that by this course the interests of stable government would be best subserved.

This action of Washington's, taken alone, would entitle him to rank as our greatest statesman. It was not merely, as so many historians seem to regard it, a question of managing two brilliant secretaries, pitted against one another like cocks in a cock-pit, as Jefferson afterward said; it was a

question of harmonizing and utilizing two political theories, neither of which was necessarily antagonistic to the other, save when developed by unbalanced men of genius like Jefferson and Hamilton.<sup>1</sup>

To this stupendous task only one man in America was competent in 1789, and that man was Washington; no American since born, perhaps not even Lincoln himself, would have been competent to it. But even Washington groaned and fared badly under it. In nearly every act of his administration he had to weigh the contending claims of these two principles, — nationalism and democracy, — and act as his own judgment dictated. The conflict is perhaps most clearly brought out in the Whiskey Rebellion in western Pennsylvania; but it is seen plainly in the Jay treaty, in the troubles with Genet and the republic he represented, in the support of Hamilton's bank, debt-assumption, and tariff measures. Through it all Washington, who was a nationalistic democrat, his stately manners to the contrary notwithstanding, had to strain every nerve

<sup>1</sup> That Washington consciously aimed at balancing parties is proved by passage after passage from his letters (see especially those to Lafayette, Jan. 29, 1789, and to Benj. Harrison, March 9, 1789), and that he understood that the radical antagonism was between aristocracy and nationalism on the one hand, and democracy and localism on the other, is as plain as any historical fact can be. He was not drifting or temporizing, but following out a well-considered policy.

to strengthen his infant government, and yet to allow free play to the democratic forces that were to develop the great West, whose future he foresaw, and to overthrow that detestible institution of slavery which he dreaded and hated. The task was almost superhuman, but so was Washington.

I am aware that in all I have hitherto said there is a good deal of assertion, and not very much that a lawyer or historian would call proof. I do not well see, however, how a popular lecture can be made the vehicle of proofs of any sort, and I hardly think that you will expect them. Still, it may be well to call your attention to the fact that nothing is easier than to cull from Washington's correspondence passages that will throw light upon his national and democratic principles. Here, for example, is a passage from a letter to Madison, written Nov. 30, 1785, that is as strong as anything the latter ever wrote in *The Federalist*:—

“We are either a united people, or we are not so. If the former, let us in all matters of general concern act as a nation which has a national character to support; if we are not, let us no longer act a farce by pretending to it; for whilst we are playing a double game between the two, we *never* shall be consistent or respectable, but *may* be the dupes of some powers, and the contempt assuredly of all.”

Mark now this sentence to Lafayette, written May 10, 1786:—

"It is one of the evils of democratical governments, that the people, not always seeing and frequently misled, must often feel before they act right; but then evils of this nature seldom fail to work their own cure."

Here is the sound democratical faith in the people's ability to reach a right decision finally — the true gloss on the proverb *vox populi, vox Dei*. You may search Washington's writings from end to end, but I do not think that you will come across a single sentence that lends countenance to that distrust of the people which has been the distinguishing mark of the true aristocrat from the days of Theognis of Megara, to those of George Cabot of Massachusetts and Beverley Tucker of Virginia.

He does, however, despair of seeing slavery abolished in his own day. The letter to Lafayette, quoted above, contains this pathetic reference to the subject: —

"Your late purchase of an estate in the colony of Cayenne, with a view of emancipating the slaves on it, is a generous and noble proof of your humanity. Would to God a like spirit would diffuse itself generally into the minds of the people of this country. But I despair of seeing it. Some petitions were presented to the Assembly, at its last session, for the abolition of slavery; but they could scarcely obtain a reading."

It is no wonder that Washington and Jefferson, who shared these views, were less and less ap-

pealed to by their Southern successors, as pro-slavery sentiments gathered strength; but the Southerner of 1896 takes pride in quoting words that must ever testify to the wisdom and humanity of the greatest American of us all, a Virginian slaveholder who yet had no hesitation in writing to a governor of South Carolina (Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, March 19, 1792) in protest against that State's importation of slaves, and in plain acknowledgment of "the direful effects of slavery."

One more quotation will perhaps be pardoned on account of the clear light it throws on Washington's practical, if not metaphysical, ideas on the nature of sovereignty. He is writing to Jay on Aug. 1, 1786; and he says: —

"I do not conceive we can exist long as a nation without having lodged somewhere a power which will pervade the whole Union in as energetic a manner as the authority of the State governments extends over the several States."

In the same letter he spoke his mind freely as to the folly of those people who were turning in their minds to monarchy as a proper relief from the internal dissensions of the country; and on the same day, as if to show that he was no alarmist, he pointed out to the Chevalier de la Luzerne, that, after all, commerce was increasing, justice was being administered, and that a way would

be found out of political complications; while to Jefferson he wrote that, in spite of the "very foolish and wicked plans for emitting paper money" into which many of the States had fallen, he still hoped for the country. The Roman Senate rewarded the defeated consul who had not despaired of the Republic; the American people owe a greater reward to the victorious general who did not despair of a people subjected to the menaces of a deadlier foe, to wit, themselves.

I have twice before in this lecture envied the ideal biographer who will comment on Washington's letters in the light of recent research and of abounding sympathy. I shall be delighted to read his comments on the letters in which Washington shows his remarkable knowledge, not only of current American, but also of foreign politics, on the letters that relate to schemes of inland navigation, to agricultural improvements, to a national university. The splendid letter to Patrick Henry recommending the new Constitution (Sept. 24, 1787), and that to the same worthy deploring the Virginia Resolutions (Jan. 15, 1799), are well known, but deserve fresh emphasis. The noble indignation expressed to Gouverneur Morris (June 21, 1792) at the report that Great Britain was asked to arbitrate between the United States and the Indians might have been quoted recently by Lord Salisbury with considerable effect.

Finally, though the subjects have only a very remote connection with statesmanship, I should like to read what our commentator will have to say about Washington's sensible views on the subject of second marriages,<sup>1</sup> and of his remarks on Joel Barlow's poetry.

The view that I have endeavored to present of Washington's statesmanship does not, of course, tally with that taken by his contemporaries or by many subsequent historians. That he was a great man few ventured to deny until the unpopularity of some of the leading measures of his two administrations unloosed upon him the curs of the Republican press. But his contemporaries, great and small, were too near him to be able to perceive the ideal and splendid character of his statesmanship. Many of them, certainly Jefferson and Hamilton, had no doubt of their own ability to manage the new government, and could point to their own services as indispensable to the man who gave his name to the administration. But no statesman has ever yet been entirely independent of subordinates, and one of the best tests of statesmanship is capacity to use men and circumstances in the interests of the nation and of humanity. Tried by this test Washington is practically above censure. He kept Jefferson and Hamilton in his service as long as they were

<sup>1</sup> Letter to George Augustine Washington, Oct. 25, 1786.



needed, he balanced them admirably, and was not afraid of either of them.<sup>1</sup>

Jefferson's own "Ana" afford convincing proof of this fact; and it is to Jefferson's lasting credit that he persisted in regarding Washington as a great man, although one who yielded to the effects of old age when he relied at the last on Hamilton. Jefferson was, I think, sincere in his admiration for Washington; and that it was extorted from him is a crowning proof of Washington's greatness. Our first President certainly was not as astute as Talleyrand or as quick as Napoleon; he had not Hamilton's mastery of finance or Jefferson's philosophic sweep of intellect; but he had what none of these men had, — wisdom. It does not require wisdom to manage a treasury or to conduct a department of foreign affairs, but it does require wisdom to steer the whole bark of state successfully. And what was Washington's immediate reward of party insult and contumely, but the return that the world has made to a majority of its wise men from the days of Socrates? Wisdom, they say, is justified of her children, but her children are not fully justified of her until after many days. It seems almost incredible to us now that creatures like Duane should have

<sup>1</sup> John Randolph appreciated this fact, and gave fine expression to it in his speech on "Retrenchment and Reform." I quote the passage in the lecture on Randolph.

dared to lift their voices against Washington until they fairly embittered his life; but such was the fact, and such is human nature. Here are a few sentences from Duane's "Remarks occasioned by the Late Conduct of Mr. Washington as President of the United States: " <sup>1</sup> —

"The cloud with which the *George* of America has covered himself has been large enough to hide his own want of merit and that of others whom he has placed in office. But when it drops, all will be exposed together. A country which has fought above seven years to expel a king cannot be persuaded to receive one by surprise."

And again: —

"But as Mr. Washington has at length become treacherous to his own fame, what was lent to him as a harmless general must be withdrawn from him as a dangerous politician."

And again: —

"Mr. Washington, it is true, is a farmer; but is he not a land-jobber from the days of Braddock?"

Perhaps it was a slight weakness in Washington to betray temper at these wingless shafts of an American pseudo-Junius, and to give Jefferson an opportunity of recording the ebullition in his "Ana;" yet, if Washington had been in Jefferson's

<sup>1</sup> Philadelphia, 1797.

place, he would never have connived at such assaults upon his chief.<sup>1</sup>

Only one other point remains to be briefly treated, and I shall draw this lecture to a close. I have taken Washington as the subject of the first in a series of lectures devoted to Southern statesmen; but how far was he distinctively Southern? By birth and many of his habits he is, of course, plainly Virginian and Southern; but I cannot say that as a statesman I find anything markedly sectional about him. His habits were in many ways those of a Virginia planter, and yet he was as thrifty as if he had been born in Connecticut. He was hospitable, and yet he was reserved. An agriculturist, he looked after the interests of commerce; a slaveholder from necessity, he nevertheless abhorred the institution.

I know of no instance in which sectional feelings disturbed his impartiality, nor do I know of a single Southern or Virginian statesman with whom he can be grouped. One reason of this is obvious—he was that *rara avis* in those days, a self-made Virginian; for in his early years he was thrown largely on his own resources. This was

<sup>1</sup> This sentence from the notorious *Aurora* for March 6, 1797, ought not to be omitted:—

“If ever there was a period of rejoicing this is the moment—every heart in unison with the freedom and happiness of the people ought to beat high with exultation that the name of WASHINGTON from this day ceases to give a currency to a political iniquity, and to legalize corruption.”

not the case with the other great Virginians of the Revolution, save Patrick Henry; and Henry's career showed traces of the shiftlessness that nearly always accompanied Virginian poverty. Washington, then, was always something more than a Virginian or a Southerner. He has always belonged to America and the nation; yet I do not think he could have developed all the features of his rounded character anywhere else than in the Virginia of the eighteenth century.

And now, in conclusion, I can only add that the private life of Washington as a man will bear our scrutiny as well as his public acts. Prudent he was, but not mean; reserved, but not cold;<sup>1</sup> simple in his tastes, but not unrefined; religious, but without cant; unlearned, but not ignorant. It is idle to expect to find in him the qualities of the artist and the scholar, as idle as to blame Milton for not shedding his blood on the fields of Naseby and Dunbar. His world was not that of art or letters or science, but of men; and as a man among men, whether in public or in private, Washington is beyond and above praise.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Consider him, for example, when in the presence of Lear he gave way to his temper at the news of St. Clair's disaster.

<sup>2</sup> It may be as well to refer here to certain points that could not be treated or stressed in the body of the lecture. Washington's ideals and aspirations are plainly seen in his ordering from England busts of Alexander the Great, Julius Cæsar, Charles XII., Frederick II., Prince Eugene, and the Duke of Marlborough. Did he foresee, when a planter at Mount Vernon, that he

But, although we may predicate this and much else about him, he is still, as has been truly said, an unknown man. Here is where the pathos of his life comes in. He stood in lonely elevation. Although the mass of his people loved him, they did not know him; and some curs, set on by thoughtless men, even dared to bark at him. We do not know him yet; and some of us, to our

might one day be reckoned among such men? His experience with regard to the West and the acquisition of the mouth of the Mississippi appears plainly in his letter to Henry Lee, of June 18, 1786. His concern at internal dissensions is nobly expressed in the letter to Jay, of May 18, 1786, especially in this sentence, "From the high ground we stood upon, from the plain path which invited our footsteps, to be so fallen! so lost! it is really mortifying."

The practicality of his statesmanship is seen in the letter to Henry Lee (Oct. 31, 1786), who had talked of bringing *influence* to bear on Shays's Rebellion. "Influence," wrote Washington, "is no government." His desire for a strong Congress is well seen in the letter to J. T. Custer, of Feb. 28, 1781, in which he does not hesitate to speak of the *nation*. For his power to use strong language, see his letter to Captain William Peachy, of Sept. 18, 1757; for his manly self-confidence, see his letter to Dinwiddie, of Oct. 5, 1757. For his political shrewdness, see letter to John A. Washington, of May 25, 1755; for his noble abhorrence of sectionalism, see the fine letter to David Stuart, of March 28, 1790; for his conception of the dignity of his office, see letter to de Moustier, of May 25, 1789; for his great knowledge of commercial affairs, see letter to de Moustier, of Aug. 28, 1788; for his full acquaintance with foreign politics, see letter to Jefferson, of Jan. 1, 1788; for his prescience with regard to the French Revolution, see letter to Gouverneur Morris, of Oct. 13, 1789. Washington, it may be remarked in conclusion, was progressive enough to connect Mount Vernon with the rest of the world by means of a private wharf; if he were living to-day he would have a private railroad and a long-distance telephone.

shame, have ceased to love him. But this very ignorance of him that remains to us after all our study of his character and his career, what is it but a crowning proof of his supreme genius? We know the lesser men of history; we can gauge the minor poets and artists; but who knows or comprehends the Cæsars or Napoleons, the Michel Angelos or the Shaksperes? And so we may well ask in all humility, who knows, or shall ever know, George Washington? and we need not be ashamed to couple his name with that of Cæsar himself.

“This earth may boast two men whose ample fame  
Doth satisfy the Ages — him that died,  
Struck down in glory by the Tiber’s side;  
And him that guards the city of his name  
Upon the broad Potomac. Free from blame  
Of petty thoughts and petty deeds they bide,  
And from their works the dull oblivious tide  
Falls back into the depths from whence it came.

They live forever in the hearts of men,  
Cæsar and Washington. — But we who sway  
This Western world which his great valor won,  
Whose mighty destiny eludes the ken  
Of prophet and of bard — shall we not pay  
Our chiefest thanks to Freedom’s noblest son?”

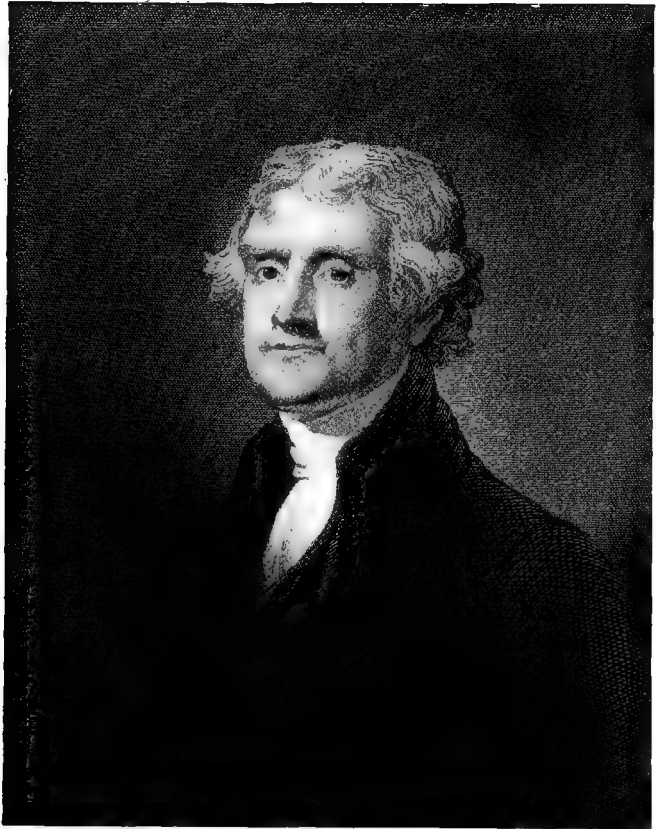


THOMAS JEFFERSON.









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I ADMITTED at the close of my first lecture that in many respects Washington must be counted as a national rather than as a sectional statesman. The same admission, with greater limitations however, has to be made with regard to Jefferson. Looked at from some points of view, he is distinctly a Virginian and a Southerner; from other points of view, he is an American; from still others, he is a cosmopolitan. In many of his personal habits and modes of thought, the typical Virginian is easily traceable; but often the Virginian disappears entirely, and is replaced by the Frenchman, or by a shadowy figure that resembles the abstract *homo*. To this protean character of the man is due much of the subtle influence and fascination that have surrounded his personality down to the present day.

<sup>1</sup> I have used the standard biographies, like Randall's, and the monographs of Morse and Schouler, as well as the "Works" in the Congressional edition and in that of Ford. (Mr. Ford's introductory essay is particularly good.) Mr. Henry Adams's "History of the United States" has been, of course, invaluable. Taine's sketch in the "Nouveaux Essais" is one-sided, but worth reading. Numerous other sources have been used, but they hardly need be named.

Washington we despair of knowing on account of his lofty greatness; Jefferson we despair of knowing because of his infinite mobility. The one man is like a mountain-peak, the other like a sea. Or, to take a comparison from the world of letters, Washington, as I have said, reminds us of Sophocles in his perfect balance and nobility; Jefferson is the Shelley of our politics. He has Shelley's idealism, his humanitarianism, his rose-colored visions, his self-contradictions, his impracticability, his foibles, his loveliness, his mistiness and intangibility. Sophocles and Washington rouse few passionate enthusiasms; Jefferson and Shelley excite reprobation or adoration. But just as it is a puzzle to know how Shelley happened to be the son of a typical English country gentleman, so it will always be something of a mystery that a man like Jefferson should have sprung from a good family of colonial Virginia.

It is not entirely a mystery, however; for Albemarle, where he was born, in 1743, was at that time a good deal of a frontier county; and the young man, with a natural turn for speculation and reading, must, whenever he threw down his books and mixed with his fellow-men, have got something of the democratic training that Washington received.<sup>1</sup> He got something from his

<sup>1</sup> See on this point the introductory essay in Ford's edition of the "Works."

books, too, that he could not have got in all probability had he been born twenty years earlier or twenty years later, — he got the full spirit of the eighteenth century into his mental and spiritual lungs, and he drew in great draughts of it.

Franklin, born earlier, drank to the full the utilitarian and practical spirit of the century; Jefferson drank some of the utilitarian, but more of the sentimental and speculative spirit. Madison, on the other hand, managed to drink in a considerable share of its prosaic spirit, of which all our Revolutionary leaders got a draught, not excepting Washington himself. The fact, then, that he was born beyond tide-water, at the very heart of the eighteenth century, and with a mind prone to speculation, accounts somewhat for the uniqueness of Jefferson's personality.

We may pass over his training at William and Mary College, which, besides introducing him to the classics and to jurisprudence, also gave him an insight into the character of the typical Virginians of the tide-water. We may pass over also the pleasant record of his social successes and of his creditable service at the bar; and we find him first giving evidence of his statesmanlike qualities when he took his seat in the House of Burgesses in 1769, where he continued in service until he was elected a member of the Continental Congress in 1775.

Throughout his legislative career, both State and national, he showed himself to have genius of the first order as a politician, but he also showed himself to have qualities that belong to the statesman rather than the politician. He was a politician when he worked his measures through, a semi-statesman when he drafted his bills and declarations, a statesman when he broke through the crust of present custom, discarded tradition, and placed his trust in the people and the future. He was no orator, not even a commander and leader of men; but he was a ready writer, a shrewd tactician, and a subtle counsellor.

He was more—he was a friend of Humanity, against whom Canning's satiric verses were destined to strike more feebly than the same worthy's diplomacy was to do some years later. Whatever we may think of this or that phase of Jefferson's character, if we are blind to his essential love and comprehension of his fellow-men, we may as well make up our minds to study him afresh; for we have failed to lay hold of the single clew that can lead us through the labyrinth of his mind and heart.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In this connection I cannot forbear quoting this fine and true sentence from Mr. Paul Leicester Ford's Introductory Essay: "And eventually this judgment will universally obtain, as the fact becomes clearer and clearer, that neither national independence nor State sovereignty, with the national and party rancors that attach to them, were the controlling aim and attempt of his

Typical of his services during the early portion of his legislative career is the strong tone of the "Resolutions intended for the inspection of the present delegates of the people of Virginia now in Convention." Unable to attend the opening of the Convention of 1774, he had sent these Resolutions, which were afterwards published as a pamphlet. They show not merely Jefferson's unrivalled skill as a drafter of state papers, and as a gauger of public sentiment, but also the underlying firmness, boldness, and patriotism of the man.

All through his life Jefferson was accused by his enemies of being a coward, and his shrinking from forcible measures did sometimes give an excuse for this view of his character and conduct. But Jefferson, though he disliked strife and courted popularity, had at bottom a fund of firmness and boldness that surprised enemies and friends alike. This firmness and boldness came out finely in his able pamphlet on the Rights of British America. Jefferson sees the logical result of England's conduct as clearly as Washington; he may not quite cast aside the velvet glove, but you feel the iron hand beneath the moment you get in its grasp, as you do before you have finished reading one page.

life, that no party or temporary advantage was the object of his endeavors, but that he fought for the ever-enduring privilege of personal freedom."



The man that wrote this strenuous pamphlet, avowing the entire independence of the colonies from Parliamentary interference, was of all others the proper man to have the chief share in drafting the Declaration of Independence of the Thirteen Colonies; but the same man was also to try to substitute an embargo for war. It is well that Jefferson was simple in his tastes; had he been fond of ornament, he must have eschewed one very precious jewel known as consistency.

It is needless to say much here of Jefferson's first services in the Continental Congress, or of the great instrument which has ever since been connected with his name. As in the House of Burgesses, his chief merit lay in his genius for drafting and getting measures adopted, which, though a useful, is not the highest sphere of statesmanship; and for his achievements in this sphere he has certainly had an abundant reward.

It is true that it became the fashion to sneer at certain features of the Declaration of Independence when the pro-slavery advocate wished to accentuate the differences between the various races of mankind; it is true, also, that one occasionally hears to-day an ill-informed fling at the doctrine that all men were created free and equal; but on the truth of that doctrine, as Jefferson and his colleagues meant it to be taken, the American Republic has stood and flourished for over a century,

and the document that embodied it will never cease to bring a flush of patriotic pride to the cheek of any true American as often as it is read. To have one's name indissolubly connected with such a masterful and epoch-making promulgation is an honor that few statesmen attain to, — an honor which Jefferson was wise enough to have recorded upon his tomb.

Shortly after he had thus secured immortality for himself, Jefferson resigned his seat in Congress, declined a diplomatic commission to France, and devoted himself to the service of his native State — or rather to its destruction, as the more conservative planters thought. The break with England would mean little to such a root and branch democrat if the people of Virginia were to continue English in their laws and customs, if they were to remain colonial and aristocratic. So he began a fight for political equality which did not formally come to an end until nearly a century later, and the effects of which are still to be traced.

First he broke down the system of entails, then he tried his hand on establishing a new system of courts of justice; he also proposed a bill for freedom of religion. This last measure was not carried through until some years later, when Jefferson was in France, and the fight over church establishment lasted until his presidency; but the great

reformer was behind the whole movement, and deserves the credit for it. It was not an attack on Christianity, as his opponents have maintained; for, though plainly a disbeliever, Jefferson never seriously undertook an attack on anything so dear to the mass of the people as their religion—he was too easy-going a philosopher for that; but it was a vigorous assertion of the democratic principles of freedom and equality.

Not a generation before inoffensive and pious Baptists<sup>1</sup> had suffered persecution in a colony which was now undergoing trials of a different sort in its own turn; Jefferson resolved that this should never happen again, and the fact is recorded on his tomb.

Another important service rendered by him at this period was his share in the revision of the laws, a task in which he was helped by Pendleton and Wythe. Jefferson's legal knowledge and acumen become fully apparent to any one who will study his contribution to this first Virginian code, which consisted of such portions of the common law and the statutes passed before 4th James I. as seemed suited to the needs of the new State. Curiously enough, the humanitarian philosopher, who shortly before, by the way, had been instrumental in getting an act of attainder passed by

<sup>1</sup> See Semple's "Virginia Baptists" for an interesting account of this persecution.

the Legislature,<sup>1</sup> admitted the principle of the *lex talionis* into his code in a rather shocking manner. He afterwards regretted his action; but it made no especial difference, for the revision of the criminal law seems not to have taken place until 1796, under the auspices of an obscure Mr. Taylor, who was, nevertheless, too enlightened to hold to the old doctrine of an eye for an eye, which Jefferson had seriously proposed.<sup>2</sup> But if Jefferson could be at times antiquated in his views, no such charge could be brought against his admirable bills for providing his State with a system of free schools and a free library.

<sup>1</sup> See my article, "The Case of Josiah Phillips," in the *American Historical Review* for April, 1896.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Schouler's account of this *lex talionis* matter does not seem to me to be quite accurate. To let the reader see some of the features of the proposed scheme of criminal procedure, I quote from the "Report of the Revisors" (1779) the following:—

"Whosoever committeth murder by poisoning, shall suffer death by poisoning."

"Whosoever committeth murder by way of duel, shall suffer death by hanging; and if he were the challenger, his body, after death, shall be gibbeted. He who removeth it from the gibbet shall be guilty of a misdemeanor, and the officer shall see that it be replaced."

Jefferson queried if the estates of both parties in a duel should not be forfeited, the deceased being equally guilty with a suicide. Other provisions applying the *lex talionis* would be scarcely agreeable to modern ears. Jefferson wrote later in his autobiography:—

"On the subject of the criminal law, all [i.e., Wythe, Pendleton, and himself] were agreed that the punishment of death should be abolished, except for treason and murder; and that for other felonies should be substituted hard labor in the public works, and in some cases the *lex talionis*. How this last revolting principle came to obtain our approbation, I do not remember."

Meanwhile I have omitted to mention a curious document drafted by Jefferson, to which his biographers have paid too little attention. I refer to his proposed Constitution for Virginia of 1776. Jefferson was always tinkering at constitutions, and he even undertook a small job of the sort for the French; but neither he nor Sieyès himself ever got up a more remarkable document than the one he sent from Philadelphia to the Virginia Convention too late to be of much use.

A comparison of this document with any of the state papers I have had previous occasion to mention brings out clearly one of Jefferson's chief weaknesses — his tendency to suspicion. Whether he slept or waked, the toad was forever squatting at his ear. It was a popular belief of the Middle Ages that the city of Naples was built on eggshells, I presume on hens' eggs: a State founded on this Jeffersonian model would certainly have been built on snakes' eggs. For example, the governor, or administrator as Jefferson called him, could hold office for one year only, and was ineligible for three years after; he could exercise no veto power, and would have exhausted his year of office in endeavoring to pick out, from the long list of things he could not do, the few things it would be lawful for him to do. Delegates to Congress, who were to be elected by the lower house of the Legislature, were to return home after their year

of office, and forget the lessons of experience, but presumably have a chance to deplore their misdeeds for a year, and to come in touch with their constituents once more.

But the high sheriffs of the counties were evidently more dangerous than the Congressmen. If elected by popular vote, they could serve one year, but must atone for five years for their folly in seeking office, before they sought it again. Finally, that no man might say that Virginia was served by any but the purest patriots, administrator, judges, and legislators were to receive no remuneration beyond their actual expenditures in the service of the State.

Virginia managed to drag along until 1830 under the Constitution she did adopt unconstitutionally in 1776; how long she would have maintained herself under Jefferson's proposed plan of government, no sane man would undertake to say. Rotation in office has been declared to be a democratic doctrine; it certainly was once a Jeffersonian one.

Mr. Jefferson doubtless wished before his own second term as governor of Virginia had expired that his provision of ineligibility had been applied in his own case. It doubtless gratified his pride to be chosen governor in 1779, just as it gratified him to be elected President twenty-one years later; but if ever a statesman had ill luck in as-

suming the reins of executive power, it was Jefferson, whether as governor or President. He was harshly censured for the weakness of his gubernatorial administration, and weakness was undoubtedly its chief characteristic; but exactly how he could have made it stronger his critics have signally failed to show. A declaration, such as Jefferson was so deft at drawing, would hardly have kept Tarleton or Cornwallis or Arnold out of Virginia, or lessened the vigor of their assaults; and the troops at the governor's disposal were little more efficient than a declaration would have been.

All Jefferson could do was to wait, especially as this was all that Washington could advise. In the end the British raids ceased, his censurers were put to silence, and the disillusioned executive fell back, as he was to do almost a generation later, on the pleasures and comforts of his domestic circle, and the unswerving devotion and affection of his fellow-citizens of Albemarle.

These citizens of Albemarle forthwith elected him unanimously a member of the House of Delegates, that he might have an opportunity of facing the critics of his unfortunate administrations; but when, with a boldness that must have cost him much nervous energy, he rose in the House to challenge these critics, nobody faced him. Then with somewhat bad grace he absented himself from the

Legislature; for, although he had out-faced criticism, the rankling of the wounds it had inflicted had not ceased. Jefferson has sometimes been called a demagogue by people who are not choice in their use of terms: a sensitive, thin-skinned demagogue is a figure presenting more contradictions than our protean hero ever managed to afford, with all his shiftiness. Jefferson was genuinely tender-hearted and sensitive, and he loved his fellow-citizens; when, therefore, they criticized him, they hurt his heart more than his pride.

His heart, however, was soon to receive a deeper wound than criticism could inflict, through the death of his dearly loved wife. Domesticity meant much to Jefferson, more than his political enemies would have us believe; for he was a tender, and, I am inclined to think, slanders to the contrary, on the whole, a pure man. Yet if his private happiness suffered through his loss, the country gained by it. He was now willing to accept diplomatic service; but that being barred by the just concluded arrangements for peace, he found again a sphere for his energies in the very unenergetic Continental Congress. He must have thought of his own flying legislature of a few years before, when he scampered out of Philadelphia to escape from a handful of mutinous soldiers; and he might have made some useful comments on the occasional disadvantage attending the denial of effi-



cient powers to a central government ; but whether he made such comments or not, he returned in due season to draft a document which should reflect almost as much lustre on his name as the Declaration of Independence, or the Virginia statute for establishing religious liberty.

His draft of a temporary form of government for the Western territory, — by far the larger portion of which had been won by a Virginian, George Rogers Clarke, and had been incorporated into Virginia during Jefferson's governorship, — though it failed to become law, contained a provision against slavery which was adopted into the famous Ordinance of 1787, and devoted to Freedom the soil beneath our feet.

Certainly, for this service to his country and humanity, Jefferson deserves the love and admiration of both ; and it is with a smile of affection that we recall some of the queer names he proposed to bestow on the divisions of the emancipated province. Pelisipia and Polypotamia have done better under other names ; but their sponsor in baptism stood ready to give them the most priceless gift that can be bestowed on States or men. He gave his whole country at the same time a gift which, while valuable, has had its drawbacks ; for he was the indisputable parent of the "almighty dollar."

He had previously given his native State a gift

the value of which has been generally recognized, and has not been surpassed in its way — I mean, of course, the interesting and authoritative “Notes on Virginia,” the most considerable work of his facile, but not always chastened pen. His proposed Constitution for Virginia, drafted in 1783, was a gift neither so valuable nor so interesting; but it is a matter of some importance to note that additional age and experience had corrected many of the crudities only too apparent in the instrument of 1776. Perhaps his own experience of the thanklessness of an executive office led him to admit that the custom of paying salaries might not be such a bad one after all.

But the period was now at hand when he was to quit his native State and country for a long career of useful service in a foreign court. The Congress, although they could not replace Dr. Franklin (to borrow Jefferson’s own finely turned compliment), chose the best possible successor to him.

Jefferson’s stay in France, of course, affected him profoundly in many ways, but not, I fancy, to the extent that is usually thought. His political and social principles were practically formed long before he craved audience at the Tuileries. His diplomatic training, which was to play such a part in his after career, especially in his presidential administrations, was naturally received during his French residence; and his culture and tastes were

immensely widened and improved, though a great French critic, M. Taine, does not think much of either. He got, too, much of that bias for France and things French that affected his political conduct in after years, though not in the degree that his Federalist enemies charged and believed. Jefferson would not have been the same man had he never lived in France, but I think he would have been, perhaps, just as great a man. For the influence of France at this juncture, as at many times in her history, was one chiefly of ideas; and French ideas had crossed the Atlantic and penetrated to Albemarle many years before.

I find little in Jefferson's life or correspondence at this period that needs to be mentioned in this running commentary, which of set purpose I am making the main portion of my lecture, — a running commentary suggesting a running stream, and this in turn suggesting Jefferson. One is, perhaps, a little surprised to find him occupying rooms in an old Carthusian monastery; and if one is of a literary turn, one fancies that such monastic shades have had no such visitor or inmate since, save when Matthew Arnold came "to the Carthusians' world-famed home," and wrote those stanzas which will fade from the memory of men only when religious doubts and longings are swept away by a return of universal faith, or drowned in a chaos of universal despair.

But Jefferson was no Arnold. He did not stand like a Greek "on some lone foreign strand," but mingled with courtly and republican society, conversed with savants, and wrote most interesting letters to his friends in America. He unfolded to Madison his favorite doctrine that one generation ought not to bind another, and he kept his friends in Virginia alive to the necessity of pressing on the reforms he had initiated. One of these reforms had related to emancipation; and he was sanguine enough to write to the Englishman, Dr. Richard Price, a letter (Aug. 7, 1785) from which I quote a sentence or two, as much to show his visionary temperament as to exhibit his sentiments concerning slavery: —

"This [Virginia] is the next State to which we may turn our eyes for the interesting spectacle of justice in conflict with avarice and oppression: a conflict wherein the sacred side is gaining daily recruits, from the influx into office of young men grown and growing up. These have sucked in the principles of liberty, as it were, with their mother's milk; and it is to them I look with anxiety to turn the fate of this question."

Alas! poor philosopher! Long before his death he learned that, when the fervor of the Revolution had spent itself, Virginia was left exhausted.<sup>1</sup> He was, however, spared the humiliation of seeing

<sup>1</sup> This decadence of Virginia was lamented by Wirt in some of his essays, which I have not at hand for exact reference.

emancipation defeated at the very time when the new Constitution he had long struggled for was obtained; of hearing a professor<sup>1</sup> in the university he founded maintain that if Mr. Jefferson had lived he would have learned to regard slavery as a blessing; and, finally, of knowing that the institution he detested was swept away not by his own people, but largely through the energy of men born on the soil he had himself dedicated to freedom eighty years before.

Another scheme, visionary for the time, deserves mention here,—his noble project for combining the Christian nations against the Barbary pirates,—a scheme which, if successful, would have saved his own administration some embarrassment. Less visionary was the service he rendered his country by receiving the newly proposed Constitution in a liberal spirit far removed from the captiousness that was characterizing such a true patriot and great man as Patrick Henry at home.

Jefferson's practical acceptance of the Constitution with saving amendments had not a little influence, as Madison foresaw it would when he hastened to secure his adhesion. The comments that he made on the instrument were certainly wiser than those which he was to make ten years later; and just as certainly they showed that he

<sup>1</sup> Professor Bledsoe in his "Liberty and Slavery."

had not merely a clear brain, but also a heart whose every beat was patriotic.

I shall not enter on any lengthy discussion of the next phase of Jefferson's career, — his service in Washington's cabinet, — both because I referred to it frequently in my last lecture, and because it brings out few qualities of his statesmanship or of his character that I have not already touched upon. In his technical duties as Secretary of State, his skill as a drafter and his recent diplomatic experience naturally stood him in good stead, and made him a model official. His commercial reports for 1793 and his opinion on the French Treaties seem, as far as I can judge, to be excellent state papers, although, from their nature, deserving of no such praise as we bestow on Hamilton's masterly reports.

Now, it is as idle to compare two such men as to compare their state papers, and yet this is what we are almost bound to do when we consider their relations to Washington's cabinet. My own opinion is, that Hamilton was the better executive officer and much more necessary to Washington; that he was more to blame than Jefferson for their constant bickering, although the latter's chronic leaning to suspicion was irritating and often absurd; but that as a man, taken for all in all, Jefferson was decidedly Hamilton's superior. He had a more subtle and fertile intellect, a less selfish

disposition, and a firmer grasp upon the ultimate verities of life.

Jefferson may have been visionary, but he never committed the absurd blunder of despising and underrating the people. All the masterly reports on finance that were ever written could not have counterbalanced this one blunder of Hamilton's, — a blunder that, in my judgment, at once deprives him of the highest rank as a statesman. As the right-hand man of a statesman who could control him, Hamilton was bound to be a credit to any country and time. Jefferson is a credit, not merely to his country, but to his race.

I am well aware, when I say this, that many of Jefferson's actions while in office under Washington cannot be passed over without grave censure. I cannot, in the face of his manly letter of Sept. 9, 1792, believe that he was guilty of as gross treachery to his great chief as has been so often charged. Jefferson was not a liar; but, like Shelley, he had a way of making his own oblique conduct look straight to his own eyes — which is an unfortunate habit, especially when you have enemies and detractors. I think that a thoroughly high-toned man should have given up Freneau<sup>1</sup> or

<sup>1</sup> Jefferson was weak enough in his "Ana" to write of Freneau as follows: "His paper has saved our Constitution, which was galloping fast into monarchy, and has been checked by no one means so powerfully as by that paper." This is under the date

his portfolio at once, and not have made a nasty entry in his "Ana" about the foibles of a noble man to whom he owed a special debt of loyalty. I think a thoroughly wise man would have scorned to record gravely the tittle-tattle of disappointed office-seekers. I think a thoroughly generous man would have hesitated to impute evil motives to every one who disagreed with him, even to men who had stood shoulder to shoulder with him in the days that tried men's souls. I cannot acquit Jefferson of many of the charges made against him, but neither can I acquit Hamilton; and I think that for high tone, for wisdom, for generosity, as well as for breadth of culture, flexibility of genius, and positive service to humanity, the brilliant Secretary of the Treasury falls below his rival.

To minds of a concrete way of judging and thinking I can hardly expect these opinions to be palatable. Such minds will naturally hold that, because parts of Jefferson's opinion against the national bank are very shadowy in their reasoning, he cannot stand a moment's comparison with the clearest thinker on financial matters that this country has ever known. With me, however, the idea always counts for more than the concrete fact; and in the realm of ideas I consider Jefferson to be Hamilton's superior.

of May 23, 1793; and yet George Washington was President at that time!



Washington, who could combine the idea and the fact, was, however, the greatest of the three. He was greatest, too, in that he possessed a nobler and truer heart. He could no more have attacked his brother secretary anonymously as Hamilton did, or have written down scandal for preservation as Jefferson did, than he could have lied or stolen. But Washington was above selfishness, which was Hamilton's bane, just as he was above suspicion, which was Jefferson's. Hence he never toppled into meanness or into positive foolishness, as his secretaries sometimes did. And that you may not suspect me of exaggeration when I accuse Jefferson of sometimes falling into positive foolishness, let me dismiss this unpleasant topic by reading you an extract from a letter to Benjamin Vaughan (May 11, 1791). He is commenting on Burke's mad course with regard to the French Revolution, and his prejudices lead him to write: "How mortifying that the evidence of the rottenness of his mind must oblige us now to ascribe to wicked motives those actions of his life which wore the marks of virtue and patriotism."

This of the philosophic statesman — this of the man who had defended the liberties of America, and had lent the cover of his own great name to the pamphlet on the Rights of British America that had fallen from the pen of the young Burgess from Albemarle just half a generation before.

When Jefferson, and shortly afterward Hamilton, retired from Washington's cabinet, it was plain to all men that they stood at the head of two very antagonistic parties, which were only waiting for Washington to be safely out of the way in order to begin a bitter struggle for supremacy. These two parties, Federalists and Anti-Federalists, differed mainly as to the scope of their interpretation of the power conferred by the Constitution upon the general government, although they claimed to differ as far as a haughty monarchist does from a ruffian Jacobin. It requires little historical penetration to perceive that practically every political party that has risen to prominence since Washington's second administration has been affiliated more or less with one of the two original parties, and that, when no special policy presses upon the country for adoption, the tendency of the American people is toward the party that takes a simple and somewhat limited view of the functions of government. This fact rather throws doubt on the assertion of those historians who claim that Hamilton's influence has been greater than Jefferson's in shaping American history.

That the principle of nationality, and with it the power of the general government, has steadily increased in strength goes without saying; but it is by no means certain that this is not mainly due

to increase of population and of commercial intercourse, and to the overcoming of space and time by means of steam and electricity, rather than to the teachings of Hamilton and his school.

On the other hand, one has but to put a few questions to the average American voter anywhere in the United States to find that, whatever party he may belong to or whatever special measures he may advocate for the time, the basis of his political reasoning, so far as he has any, is Jeffersonian. Jefferson, it seems to me, has impressed his personality upon the politics of this country in a way that can be accounted for only by ascribing to him a subtle and mysterious genius that enabled him to comprehend and sympathize with the masses of the people.

And so, while Hamilton dictated the Federalist policy from New York, Jefferson retired to Monticello, and wove his webs of influence. By letters and conversation he dominated the minds of the younger men at the South, and put himself in touch with the stalwart frontiersmen of the West. Some of his letters, like the famous one to Mazzei, were to give him no end of trouble,<sup>1</sup> but they are all interesting, and some are prophetic ;

<sup>1</sup> This sentence from the letter to P. Mazzei of April 24, 1796, was enough to stir up strife :—

“It would give you a fever were I to name to you the apostates who have gone over to these heresies, men who were Samsons in the field

as, for example, that to Tench Coxe of May 18, 1794, which plainly foreshadows the embargo and non-intercourse policy that were to make his second administration memorable.<sup>1</sup>

His accession to the vice-presidency changed his residence, but not his policy. He was still

and Solomons in the council, but who have had their heads shorn by the harlot England."

It was the harlot "squint-eyed suspicion" that clipped the locks of this Virginian Samson. Jefferson was, in spite of all his culture, utterly unable to rid himself of what seems to be a radical tendency of the agricultural and the bourgeois mind, when once its confident self-content has been shaken, to suspect all the other classes in the body politic of sinister and basely selfish purposes. It was this tendency of mind that caused him to write to Gideon Grainger on Aug. 13, 1800, as follows:—

"Let the General Government be reduced to foreign concerns only, and let our affairs be disentangled from those of all other nations, except as to commerce, which the merchants will manage the better the more they are left to themselves [O voice crying from the desert !], and our General Government may be reduced to a very simple organization, and a very inexpensive one—a few plain duties to be performed by a few servants."

This gentleman-farmer programme would not have made the United States a great nation; but it is surely better than high protection, government purchase of wheat, free silver, or any other of the political fads of our day.

<sup>1</sup> From the letter to Coxe:—

"I love, therefore, Mr. Clarke's proposition of cutting off all communication with the nation which has conducted itself so atrociously."

Such a peaceful method of retaliation naturally suited a rural philosopher, and it was destined to be supported with blind vigor by the rural South which it did most to hurt. But, whatever we may think of the embargo and its author, let us never forget that he was unable to descend to the depth of fatuousness reached by those statesmen who have actually laid a tax on knowledge. Jefferson maintained that books should be imported free of duty. See "*Works*" (Cong. ed.), VII., 222.

haunted by the idea that a monarchical party was in existence, and only waiting for a good opportunity to subvert the government. He still recorded silly scandal; but he had judgment enough to point out to John Taylor of Carolina that any attempt to split the Union would be followed by smaller subdivisions, until anarchy would ensue.

He wrote also to the same worthy in November, 1798, that for the present he was for resolving the Alien and Sedition laws to be against the Constitution and void, and for addressing the other States to obtain similar declarations. He was for taking no step farther, but would await results. Shortly before he had written his fears that the infamous Acts were but experiments for corrupting the American mind, and that soon an attempt would be made to make John Adams king!

Mr. McMaster is right in designating such stuff as folly; but when he says that it is enough of itself to deprive Jefferson of every possible claim to statesmanship, he indulges in extravagance of statement that makes one feel that he, at least, does not possess every requisite for writing impartial history. Yet Jefferson's letters at this important crisis are not as interesting as the famous Kentucky Resolutions, which he practically drafted, and the Virginia Resolutions, that embodied his ideas.

With regard to these notorious documents, which I shall mention again when I come to discuss Calhoun and nullification, it seems sufficient to say that they were plainly more of a party expedient called out by a grave political crisis than a deliberate attempt at formulating a doctrine or founding a school of politics. As passed, the Kentucky Resolutions were softened down from Jefferson's original draft; but that draft, and the letter to Taylor that I have quoted, show that Jefferson proposed to act in company, and that the monstrous and absurd doctrine of nullification by a single State, so solemnly advanced by Calhoun a generation later, was hardly in his immediate contemplation.

That the position he did take was dangerous, no sane man will deny. That his own feathers winged the shaft that pierced him must have been plain to his mind when he read Governor Trumbull's insolent remarks on the embargo a decade later. That the Hartford Conventionists and the Carolina Nullifiers made use of his ammunition are plain historical facts.

Yet for all this I venture to think that Jefferson has been badly treated with regard to these resolutions. The Alien and Sedition laws were not merely silly, but dangerous in their tendency, and affected rights that Jefferson was especially and properly tender about. On the theory of

compact which was widely held at the time, the States certainly had rights which ought to be guarded. The power of the Supreme Court to override a law of Congress was much in doubt; for Marshall was not yet on the bench, and *Marbury vs. Madison* was a case still to be heard of.

Under all these circumstances it was not unnatural for such a man as Jefferson to propose an experiment—an experiment involving peaceful co-operation. There have been worse experiments in pushing a doctrine to extremes made in our history, perhaps very recently. At any rate, I refuse for one moment to believe that Jefferson seriously looked forward to a dissolution of the Union, or that he would have relished the idea that he would be quoted in support of the doctrine of secession in its naked metaphysical form. Secession to him did not differ greatly from revolution. I repudiate also the suspicion to which Hamilton gave heed, that he supported the Union because he wished to have as large and great a country as possible to preside over.

For it was plain that Jefferson was logically the proper successor to the Federalist President, who, throwing away the moderation of Washington's policy, had rushed with his party to destruction. Anti-Federalism, or rather Republicanism of a simple type, really represented the people of America, and had to be given a trial. Private

machinations and a clumsy method of election came near depriving the party of its true head, and seating the unscrupulous Burr in the chair of the chief magistrate; but the country was saved this fate through Hamilton's grudging and ungenerous support of his old rival. It was a hard thing for Hamilton to do, and he deserves credit for having done it; but it is open to us to wish that his famous letter to Bayard, contrasting Jefferson and Burr, had shown just a slight trace of magnanimity.<sup>1</sup> Jefferson had himself borne ungrudging testimony at least once to Hamilton's ability,<sup>2</sup> but the latter was too colossal an egotist to return the compliment in kind. He was selfish and cold, even when the man who had made him what he was lay dead at Mount Vernon.

You will perhaps wonder that I should proceed

<sup>1</sup> There is little magnanimity, for example, in the following sentence of the letter to Bayard (Jan. 16, 1801): —

"I admit that his politics are tinctured with fanaticism; that he is too much in earnest in his democracy; that he has been a mischievous enemy to the principal measures of our past administration; that he is crafty and persevering in his objects; that he is not scrupulous about the means of success, nor very mindful of truth; and *that he is a contemptible hypocrite.*"

The last six words, which I myself have italicized, do Hamilton's memory much more harm than they do Jefferson's. In them the writer, having already put his sting in, deliberately twisted it around.

<sup>2</sup> Jefferson to Madison, Sept. 21, 1795: —

"Hamilton is really a colossus to the Anti-Republican party. Without numbers; he is an host in himself."



so leisurely when my time is limited, and I have Jefferson's two administrations and his long old age at Monticello still to describe; but the truth is, I intend to treat Jefferson's executive career in a very brief and simple way. It has already been made clear to you, I trust, at least by implication, that Jefferson did not have the qualities of a great executive, and that, if his presidency was to be a success, such success would be largely accidental. Jefferson was visionary and suspicious, sensitive and easy-going, ambitious and careless; like some whist-players, he knew the theory of the game, but was a very bad player.

Yet if any man ever deserved to succeed on account of pure motives, that man was Jefferson. He really believed that a new era of peace and fraternity had dawned for America, and in the end for the world, when he entered the White House in the ill-kempt village of Washington. The protestations of good will and desire for unity made by his first inaugural represented the most genuine and fundamental elements of the man's character.

Our historians have in the main used Jefferson's administrations as object-lessons in political inconsistency, but I confess this seems to me to be a rather sorry game. That a party in power should stretch the principles of action which it held in opposition is as natural as the law of gravitation,

and is necessary to executive strength as well as to political progress. That Jefferson should have purchased Louisiana in spite of his constitutional scruples may be viewed as a proof of inconsistency, or of sound statesmanship, according to a historian's temper.

For my own part I look on it as a proof of the sound common sense that always underlay Jefferson's theories and ideas, even when they were most visionary. As to his diplomacy, I confess that I have a hard time following it, even in the admirable and lucid volumes of Mr. Henry Adams; but I suspect Jefferson had a harder time keeping up with Napoleon. It was surely sound policy to keep his eyes open for every chance to acquire the Floridas; but it is not clear to me that every step taken in this tortuous matter was wise or even dignified. Certainly the rude treatment of the British minister, Merry, did no credit either to the President of the United States or to the Virginian gentleman.

The embargo policy is like the Florida policy, so wrapped up in diplomatic folds that I must again confess to having a hard time in following it. I do not think that it shows any tremendous amount of unwisdom on Jefferson's part, although it does give proof of his pertinacity. That he could injure England and France by stopping our trade with them was certainly an idea that seemed

feasible, and one that would commend itself to a philosopher and a theorist and a gentleman farmer. That he entered upon his policy out of subservience to Napoleon was a slander that reflected no credit upon the New Englanders, who through the practical encouragement and protection of their manufactures laid the foundations of a wealth to which the Southerners, who blindly supported their President's embargo, were the chief contributors.

I do not see how Jefferson is to be harshly blamed for not foreseeing that England would fall into the hands of such narrow fanatics as Percival and Castlereagh, or that Napoleon would in his wild plans of empire include the New World with the Old. In short, what chiefly affects me when I study the whole matter is the pathos of it, — a philosopher and a friend of peace struggling with a despot of superhuman genius and a Tory cabinet of superhuman insolence and stolidity. I confess, however, that there are places in the record when the flush mounts to my cheeks and my blood boils at the utter lack of manly resistance displayed by my country under such insulting provocations.

In the matter of Burr and his conspiracy it seems easy to explain some of Jefferson's supineness, although not the whole of it, as due to his reliance on the general loyalty of the people. His

interference with the trial of the traitor is less excusable from the point of view of propriety; but, on the whole, his letters to the prosecuting attorney Hay seem to me to be quite moderate, considering his well-known relations to Judge Marshall,<sup>1</sup> who assuredly did not shine with his wonted lustre in this notorious case. His covering up Wilkinson's complicity was a nasty business, but is sufficiently explained by the proverb, that he who touches pitch must needs be defiled.

Yet, when all is said, the purchase of Louisiana and the successful war with Tripoli, together with the decided impetus given to the national idea by Jefferson's departure from the rules of strict construction, are positive features of these two administrations that outweigh all the negative criticism advanced at the time by discontented Federalists, or subsequently by historians with a bias. Jefferson retired to Monticello wearied with the struggle kept up with foes at home and abroad, sick of the fickleness of popular favor, and conscious of the failure of his most cherished theories and schemes. It was pathetic; but at least he had given the lie to his enemies, and

<sup>1</sup> It is certainly matter of regret that the two greatest Virginians of their time should have been so antagonistic. I have always wondered in this connection whether Jefferson later in life recalled a sentence he wrote Madison (June 29, 1792), apropos of Hamilton's desire to get Marshall into Congress: "I think nothing better could be done than to make him a judge."

shown that he loved the Union, and had no intention to dismember it. He had secured for it a magnificent extension of territory, and he had thoroughly discredited the opponents of that democracy which was to flourish and grow strong therein.

That these positive features of his administrations were remembered to his credit, while its unpleasant features were forgotten, is clearly proved by the reverence paid him during his long period of repose at Monticello. When it was known that his finances were embarrassed, the nation came to his relief; and if the pilgrims who flocked to worship at his shrine were an annoyance, they were at the same time a solace to his wounded pride. He kept up much of his former influence by his letters, and could flatter himself that his old age was not useless to his State or people, when he saw the walls of his ideal University rising against the hills of his beloved Albemarle.<sup>1</sup> Finally, it was his fortune to pass away with his old associate and friend, John Adams, on the day they had combined to render memorable.

And now, what are the general conclusions to be drawn concerning this remarkable man? That

<sup>1</sup> For Jefferson's services as an educator, a point not sufficiently stressed by his biographers, see Dr. H. B. Adams's "Thomas Jefferson and the University of Virginia," in the Bureau of Education publications, and my own "English Culture in Virginia," in the Johns Hopkins studies.

he was a versatile genius is certain, and that he left behind him a prodigious influence is also clear. That he was a statesman of the highest rank, like Cæsar or Cromwell or Washington, in the realm of facts and ideas, I suppose few will affirm. That he was a profoundly influential statesman in the realm of ideas, I suppose few will deny. That the ideas which he made current were inevitable, and for the best, will be affirmed or denied according to the political philosophy we hold. They were almost, if not quite, repudiated by the advanced pro-slavery advocates; but I believe that the mass of the Southern people still hold to them in the main, and I think this is true of the people of the whole country.

Manhood suffrage, the rule of the majority, perfect freedom of thought and action, peace rather than war, and devotion to science and the useful arts, — these are the leading ideas that Jefferson inculcated, and they are the leading ideas that guide the American citizen to-day. We no longer have Jefferson's fear of tyranny before our eyes, and we have outgrown his prejudice against manufactures, but we are still in the main his disciples.

In one respect, however, we continue to lag far behind the ideal he would have had us reach. Our democracy does not care sufficiently for the things of the mind, it has not endeavored to give

flexibility to its intellect. In this respect Jefferson was far ahead of his own age, and he is in many ways ahead of ours; for, if he were alive to-day, he would be the first to laugh or frown at those foolish people who oppose reforms simply because they were not known to Thomas Jefferson in an age whose problems were far less complex than ours. He always gave his mind full play; and though perhaps the balance inclined to science, he knew full well the value of culture in its broadest sense, though not himself endowed with fine tastes.

It is the fashion to speak of him as a man ahead of his age, and to point to his proposals for a system of public instruction, *et cetera*, as proof of the fact. It is also remembered by a few that he was the first man in this country, if not in the world, to point out the propriety of teaching youths the rudiments of Anglo-Saxon. But Jefferson's chief claim in this respect rests on his apprehension of the value of culture to every citizen, no matter how humble — he is an eighteenth-century Matthew Arnold, without Arnold's supreme taste in poetry,<sup>1</sup> but with far more than Arnold's political acumen. A Democracy of Sweetness and Light was what Jefferson wished to see established in

<sup>1</sup> Jefferson actually thought at one time that Ossian was the greatest bard that ever existed, which is much worse than Washington's praise of Joel Barlow. See "Works" (Cong. Ed.), I. 99.

this country ; and I am optimist enough to believe that his wish will be partly realized, in spite of recent events in the political world.

It is just here that Jefferson most sharply separates himself from the other Southern, indeed, I may say from all other American statesmen. The direct, vigorous methods that have usually characterized Southern men are not his methods, nor are their temporary and transient objects his objects. He is a Transcendentalist in the field of politics, born, not in New England, but in Virginia. Like Washington, he is greater than his State or section ; but his State and section are proud to have given him to the Union.

Yet in many ways he was more of a Southerner than Washington. He had the easy-going, somewhat slipshod manners of the old Virginians, he had their careless hospitality and improvidence, and above all he had their accessibility. When he drew up in his shell it was because he was timid, not because he was dignified.

But why continue to attempt to describe the most indescribable man that ever fascinated and puzzled a biographer ? We can see him with his sandy hair, his tall, slouchy figure, his often washed corduroys, his heelless slippers ; we can follow his political career in numerous histories and biographies ; we can trace the moving of his mind in thousands upon thousands of his letters ; we can



make a pilgrimage to Monticello, and judge of his eccentricities by the remarkable abode he fashioned for himself; but, when all is done, we shall, if we are honest, confess that, though he is still as fascinating, he is still as mysterious and inscrutable as ever.

JOHN RANDOLPH OF ROANOKE.







JOHN RANDOLPH.

## JOHN RANDOLPH OF ROANOKE.<sup>1</sup>

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THE United States have, in their time, produced some queer candidates for the fame and emoluments awarded by a grateful people to their statesmen; but among these eccentrics, there is only one that I can recall whose ill-balanced talents have been great enough, when all allowances are made, to render a study of his career absolutely necessary to a thorough comprehension of our political history.

This ill-balanced statesman is the celebrated John Randolph of Roanoke, — the only eccentric who has been admitted into the well-known “American Statesmen” series, where, it is need-

<sup>1</sup> I have relied mainly, of course, upon Mr. Henry Adams’s excellent life of Randolph in the “American Statesmen” Series, as well as on his “History.” I have also used, but with caution, the two-volumed life by Hugh A. Garland. Mr. Bouldin’s less pretentious book has been used with equal caution, but with some profit. Most *Randolphiana* will be found to bear only the most gentle handling; but I have excerpted here and there passages of interest, especially from F. W. Thomas’s volume of sketches. Randolph’s “Letters to a Young Relative” were naturally resorted to for personal traits; and his speeches, as given in Benton’s “Abridgment,” were duly studied.

less to say, his career, as delineated by that admirable historian, Mr. Henry Adams, furnishes an effective foil to the lives of great and consistent statesmen like Washington and Lincoln, and an agreeable contrast to those of certain mediocrities that need not be named. It is true that Sam Houston is another eccentric whose career is well worth studying; but this fact arises rather from Houston's success as a military adventurer than from anything accomplished by him when he wrapped his blanket around him and posed as a statesman. Besides, even as an eccentric, Houston is not so interesting as Randolph; although he may, perhaps, be credited with having made the most thoroughly mysterious marriage-venture on record after that of Milton.<sup>1</sup>

With regard now to the interest that attaches to Randolph's career from the point of view of his eccentricities, I need not anticipate, for throughout this lecture we shall have abundant illustration of the defects of his qualities; but it will be as well to state briefly, at the outset, the main features of his career that give him a place among our native statesmen, this word being used, of course, in a somewhat loose sense.

John Randolph, during Jefferson's first administration, was one of the most efficient and thorough-going party leaders on the floor of the House of

<sup>1</sup> See Mr. A. M. Williams's excellent biography of Houston.

Representatives that have been produced since the birth of the nation. From Jefferson's second administration, almost to the close of his Congressional career, Randolph was the most pertinacious and personally dreaded free-lance in politics that this country has ever known. At times he almost rose to the dignified position of leader of the opposition. He was also the most consistent and able champion of strict construction of the Constitution and of sectionalism, perhaps I should say localism, in politics that the South produced during the first quarter of this century; for he took up the mantle dropped by Jefferson when he became President, and handed it on to Calhoun when the latter entered the Senate as the coryphæus of nullification.

In other words, Randolph is important as the most typical representative under the Constitution of that Virginian school of reactionary politics of which George Mason had been the most conspicuous leader during and just after the Revolution. Randolph is, finally, with the possible exception of John Taylor of Carolina, the Southerner of all others who saw most clearly, prior to Calhoun, the trend affairs were taking and would take with regard to the institution of slavery. For these reasons, then, a careful study of his career is appropriate and important in a course of lectures devoted to Southern statesmen.

John Randolph was born June 2, 1773, of a



Virginia family that has always ranked among the first in the State. He boasted of having the blood of Pocahontas in his veins, could claim kin with such distinguished patriots as Peyton and Edmund Randolph, and was compelled to admit that even such an iconoclast as Mr. Jefferson was a distant relative. His father dying two years after he was born, his mother gave him, in 1778, a step-father in the person of Mr. St. George Tucker, a Bermuda emigrant; and he is thus connected with another Virginian family that has since won considerable distinction. Relationships mean a good deal for most Virginians; but they mean especially much in connection with John Randolph, for a great share of his pride in his native State was really, at bottom, pride in his distinguished ancestry and connections.

The date and place of his birth also were destined to mean not a little to this scion of the Virginia Randolphs. Born in the tide-water region, his sympathies were all enlisted on the side of the aristocratic slave-owners of that section; and he rarely showed any sympathy with the growing West, whether with the frontier counties of his own State, or with the new and stalwart communities that were growing up beyond the Alleghanies. This lack of sympathy was to be displayed in many a debate with Henry Clay in Congress, and in many a warning utterance in

the Virginia Convention of 1829-1830, when he strenuously opposed all efforts to increase the political power of the frontier counties.

The year of his birth was also of considerable importance to him, for he was born too late to receive any great benefit from the stir and impetus given to men's thoughts and feelings by the Revolution; he grew to manhood amid the strife and bickerings that characterized the welding period of the discordant States, and the formation of the Federalist and Republican parties; and he had the incalculable misfortune of having to assume leadership of a generation of men who were compelled to recognize that their fathers had accomplished deeds which they themselves had neither the opportunity nor the ability to equal. Worse still, the giants of former days lived on beyond the allotted years of man, and more or less dominated the affairs of their successors, thus giving them less chance than is usual in political history for developing such elements of greatness as they might possess.

And John Randolph was the most unfortunate man of his unfortunate generation; for it was his fate to have to throw himself into opposition with the older generation represented by Jefferson some years before its power was at all likely to be broken, and when at last its power was broken, he was a little too old and too discredited by his

years of frustrated efforts to be in at the death, if one may use a phrase that would have found favor with a Virginian fox-hunter.

When Mr. Madison surrendered to the new generation, he tendered his sword to Clay and Calhoun, not to Randolph, who by an ironical turn of fate was found opposing a war which liberated the youths of 1812 from the veterans of '76. Randolph, in other words, comes half way between Madison and Monroe on the one hand, and Clay and Calhoun on the other. Ousted from power, he was little tempted to swerve from his political principles, which were in their turn little calculated ever to bring him into power. He was not like the man who can continue to wear the same cut of coat in perfect confidence that a change of styles, reverting to old types, will bring him into fashion again. Even on the subject of slavery itself, the only subject in which he had the future with him, that is to say the future of his section, he was destined to be a mere forerunner and prophet to Calhoun. John Randolph had a good many queer ideas and superstitions; but if he had believed in astrology, and maintained that he was born under an unlucky star (as he practically did), little fault could be justly found with him.

But Randolph's date of birth was unlucky for him in another respect. Cut out from the great

liberalizing movements of the generation preceding his own, entering upon manhood at the meanest and lowest period of our early political history, that of the Alien and Sedition laws, he was utterly unable, in spite of his acute mind, to break away from two very important but baleful influences. One, that of locality, has been before referred to. He became a narrow tide-water aristocrat, contemning democracy and the West, clinging to an effete past and a colonial dependence on England in all matters of mental and social significance, and confronting the future with a dominant impractical purpose, to wit, the maintenance of slavery.

The second influence was a more distinctly spiritual one. Randolph was a *fin de siècle* eighteenth-century man. He passed under the spell of morbid sentimentalism and romanticism, never to shake it off. The "Sorrows of Werther" and the "Mysteries of Udolpho" were more or less reproduced on the Appomattox, and the cynicism and despair of "Lara" were somewhat anticipated. The "Man of Feeling" even made his appearance near Petersburg. But fate, heredity, and environment combined to prevent Randolph from giving literary expression, save in his letters, to his emotions, and he passed out of his youthful period of storm and stress into a noisy arena of selfish and recalcitrant politics; he was not permitted to at-

tain the philosophic calm of Wordsworth or the orthodox conservative peace of Southey, and he was just a bit too old to be stirred by the impetus of the French Revolution to the strenuous revolt of Byron or the optimistic humanitarianism of Shelley.

Willy-nilly he became the sport of a fate more malevolently bitter and sardonic than usually, thank God! dogs the footsteps of us poor mortals. To paraphrase Matthew Arnold, the genius of Virginia, foreseeing the inevitable decline of her glory and prowess, let a bitter smile of despair play for a moment upon her lips — that smile was Randolph.

The boyhood of this Heine of Virginia politics, whose life, like Heine's, was one long disease, but whose death, in what was to him a foreign capital, was at least not caused by expatriation, needs some little comment if we are to understand his after career. One would naturally have expected that the fact that his earliest experiences of the British were connected with their raid of Virginia under the traitor Arnold would have developed somewhat the same feelings toward them in his breast that their wanton destruction of Washington a generation later developed in the hearts of Americans at large; but such does not appear to have been the case.

The boy took to deploring the loss of prestige

suffered by the tide-water planters through the democratic changes furthered by Jefferson, rather than the losses inflicted by the British, or brought upon the section by a wasteful system of culture, although he grew eloquent enough over the latter phase of misery as he advanced in years. I much doubt whether he got a great deal of the vigorous, out-of-door training of a boy on a Virginian plantation, as Mr. Adams seems to think he did — he was too delicate for that; but he did get the civilizing training given by contact with refined and gentle people. He got lessons in dignified manners, in genealogical lore, and in aristocratic but mistaken notions as to the importance of landed estates.

He got, too, a taste for reading that was to make him something of a *dilettante*, and to give a tone to his oratory that was to distinguish it from that of all other Americans. It never made him a scholar, as many of his admiring fellow-citizens have claimed, nor did it widen his views of life as genuine culture ought to do; but it certainly pointed his epigrams. Blifil and Black George are, through Randolph, almost living characters to many an American who never read "Tom Jones" or never heard of Fielding. Later in life, writing to a young relative in obvious imitation of Lord Chesterfield, the eccentric and not altogether courtly Virginian gave testimony to the effect of

books upon him in language that deserves to be quoted : —

“But if from my life were to be taken the pleasure derived from that faculty [of reading], very little would remain. Shakespeare and Milton and Chaucer and Spenser and Plutarch, and the ‘Arabian Nights’ Entertainments,’ and Don Quixote and Gil Blas and Tom Jones and Gulliver and Robinson Crusoe, ‘and the tale of Troy divine,’ have made up more than half of my worldly enjoyment.”<sup>1</sup>

From the same letter we learn that he had read nearly all this and more by the time he was eleven years old. It is probably quite true, as Mr. Adams avers, that he would not have read Baxter’s “Saint’s Rest” — I am not so sure about the “Pilgrim’s Progress;” it is also true, as the same writer opines, that “it was to Shakespeare and Fielding that his imagination naturally turned;” but it must be remembered that in one important respect he failed to derive benefit from these great souls. He failed to catch any large portion of their sympathy for humanity, —

“As broad and general as the casing air.”

Far more in keeping with his nature was the gothic romanticism that began to affect his imagination with Percy’s “Reliques” in 1784–1785. He was one of Scott’s earliest admirers, and he

<sup>1</sup> Letter to T. B. Dudley, Feb. 16, 1817.

might have been cited by Mark Twain in support of the curious theory that the Waverley novels had a great deal to do with keeping the South in a backward state of civilization. The representative of a decaying aristocracy felt a fellow-feeling with the resuscitated barons of the Middle Ages.

Besides browsing in good old books, and getting religious and social ideas from a devoted mother who died too soon, John Randolph did little toward obtaining what we call an education. He acknowledged to his nephew,<sup>1</sup> later on, that he was "a very ignorant man;" and, although his preposterous biographer, Mr. Garland, thought fit to caution readers against the over-modesty of this statement, it is plain, from the description Randolph gave to the same relative of his early schooling, that he was never what could be called a thoroughly trained and rounded man. In this essential respect too, then, he was less fortunate than his predecessors, like Jefferson, Madison, and Mason.

It is true that both Princeton and Columbia can claim him as an alumnus, but his stay at both colleges was short; and his studying law with his relative, Edmund Randolph, Washington's attorney-general, was plainly little more than a matter of form. He did learn something of town life, however, in New York and Philadelphia, and de-

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Dudley, Feb. 15, 1806.



veloped an early and acute interest in politics, chiefly negative and anti-Federal. His hostility to the Adams dynasty is traced to an incident of this period; a coachman of the second President having, ignorantly of course, cracked his whip at the brother of the man who was afterwards to take some revenge on the father and more on the son.

More important, perhaps, than his stay at the North was his trip, doubtless on horseback, to visit his friend Bryan in Georgia. He stopped at Charleston long enough to learn something of that aristocratic city, and then pushed on to mingle with the less settled society of the frontier State, then stirred up over the famous Yazoo frauds. This was the rock on which the bark of his political fortunes was to split. He espoused so heartily the cause of the people of Georgia against their corrupt Legislature and the speculators, that the subject became a matter of monomania to him, and, as we shall see, led him into conflict with Madison and other prominent men, and procured his downfall.

All his States'-rights proclivities enlisted him on Georgia's side, and the fact that he had been in the very midst of the strife gave him a kind of "*quorum pars magna fui*" pride that increased his monomania. For many a long year his speeches were to be full of the matter, and he had no more terrible invective in his stock than "Yazoo-Man."

Mr. Adams has, with not a little truth, called Randolph a Virginian Quixote; if so, the Yazoo affair was certainly his adventure with the wind-mills.

On his return to Virginia, Randolph was met by the sad news of the death of his brother Richard, an event which may be described as the climax of his desolation. His father and mother were both dead; henceforward he had charge of the family estates, and, worse still, of the family name. His brother's children were unfortunate, and destined to be more of a care than a comfort; he was to have family secrets to keep into which we need not pry; his own love-affair was to assume a mysteriously tragic turn, — in short, it was his fate to become a lonely man in every sense of the term.

It would little profit us to describe or discuss this loneliness, about which he himself, however, talked and wrote rather melodramatically; but we must remember that it went, along with his dyspepsia, his subsequently acquired habits of drinking, and his inherited taint of madness, to form his morbid and curious character. It had much to do also with making him so effective and devil-may-care a free lance in politics. It doubtless, too, strengthened his remarkable hold upon his constituents.

When, later, he removed to Charlotte County,

near the Roanoke River, and lived his mysterious, erratic life in his unpretentious cabins, his loneliness and the contrast of his situation (so unlike that of a Virginia nobleman) with his pretensions moved both the imagination and the sympathy of his honest and unsophisticated neighbors, and gave him constituents worthy of his famous, if rather over-wrought, eulogy. Mr. Adams may be right when he attributes much of Randolph's hold upon his district to shrewd use of his powers as a scold and a bully; but these qualities were not likely to have made him friends among the gentry, and are insufficient to explain the fascination he unquestionably exerted upon high and low alike. He still fascinates us, though "'tis sixty years since," and that, too, even after we have studied him in the disillusioning pages of Mr. Adams and the halo-forming chapters of Mr. Garland.

But I am anticipating. He is not John Randolph of Roanoke yet, but John Randolph of Bizarre (ominous name), near Farmville, head of a family of women, small children, and ne'er-do-well hangers-on, like John and William Thompson. The former of these two young gentlemen was the author of some political effusions signed by various Roman patriots, and had, according to Randolph, a prodigious genius which was nipped by an early death. Both brothers flattered Randolph, and encouraged his melodramatic tastes;

and all three must have devoured the sentimental and romantic fiction and poetry then coming into vogue.

On no other supposition can one explain the pompous and silly phraseology, or the vaporous gloom, of the epistles which passed between them whenever they were separated. The heroes of Godwin, Monk Lewis, and Mrs. Radcliffe, as well as those of Rousseau, Goethe, and Mackenzie, must have listened, as well as his relative, Mrs. Dudley, to Randolph striding across his floor at night exclaiming, "Macbeth hath murdered sleep! Macbeth hath murdered sleep!" Some, at least, of them must have followed him when he would "have his horse saddled in the dead of night, and ride over the plantation with loaded pistols." And some of them must have glanced approvingly over his shoulder when, even as a member of Congress, he wrote home to his "friend and brother, William Thompson" a letter of stilted and somewhat priggish advice which concluded as follows: —

"To our amiable sister — for such she considers herself with respect to you — I commit you, confident that your own exertion, aided by her society, will form you such as your friend will rejoice to behold you. Write to him frequently, I beseech you; cheer his solitary and miserable existence with the well-known characters of friendship. Adieu, my dear brother."

Later on people of the neighborhood thought that Thompson was taking very kindly to the widowed lady to whose care he was committed, and was in a fair way to become Randolph's brother in good earnest; so the high-strung youth felt constrained to leave Bizarre, and the Damon and Pythias element was taken out of Randolph's life. It left its effects, however.

But romantic vaporings had not quenched the early interest in politics that has been already noted; and the excitement of Virginia during the disputes over the Alien and Sedition laws brought out John Randolph, *ætat.* 26, as a Republican candidate for Congress. Few more dramatic canvasses than his have been made in this country. Washington, dreading the extent of the reaction against Federalism, and perhaps having wind of the arsenal building at Richmond to furnish munitions of war should Virginia go out of the Union, had written a noble letter to Patrick Henry,<sup>1</sup> urging him to become a candidate for the Legislature in the interests of the cause of order and stable government. Henry had resisted the adoption of the new Constitution, and had prophesied the decline of Virginian and Southern influence and power under the encroachments of the general government; but he was no anarchist, or even a French democrat, and he answered Washington's

<sup>1</sup> See *ante*, page 38.

summons with an alacrity which marks the culmination of his moral greatness, although it was at the same time the last expiring flash of his physical vigor.

Of course there were not wanting then, nor have there been wanting since, men willing to accuse Patrick Henry of having deserted his Republican principles in order to win the good opinion of Washington, and to respond in a gracious way to the flattery of the Federalist President who had offered him a diplomatic appointment to France. But this is to misapprehend Henry's character, and to cast an unnecessary slur on our common humanity. Henry turned upon his own followers when he found they were rushing past him into yawning dangers and perils. He had thought hitherto that it was possible to walk slowly along the narrow ledge of State sovereignty, but he knew there could be no rushing and galloping along it. So he announced himself as a candidate for the Legislature from Charlotte County, where he now resided; and it was known that he had been singled out to oppose Madison, who was also to return to a body where he had years before made his mark.

Henry, doubtless, little thought that in the beardless stripling of twenty-six who announced himself for Congress from the Charlotte district on the anti-Federalist side, the political principles

of his youth and maturity would find, for the next quarter of a century, their most consistent representative.

Nor, when a joint debate was arranged between Randolph and himself for March Court, 1799, could the old Orator of the Revolution have fancied that he was about to listen to the new Orator of Virginia's Decline and Fall. Biographers and eulogists of Randolph have in reference to this debate said not a little about setting and rising suns; but it was Randolph's luminary, not Henry's, that was in reality clad in the blood-red glow of the evening.

Traditionary accounts are the only information we possess about this historic and dramatic debate, in which Virginia may be almost said to have stood at the parting of the ways, casting longing looks upward at the trembling star of her glory that had hitherto guided her feet, then turning and following the will-o'-the-wisp that was to lure her on to her fall.

We are told that everybody who was anybody in the district had made it a point to come out to hear what it was feared would be Patrick Henry's last speech. Hampden-Sidney professors, learned divines, rich planters of the surrounding counties, were all there; and the plainer farmers, the overseers, the few store-keepers, and the numerous lawyers were there too. Body-slaves and free

negroes stood at the outskirts of the crowd; and not far from them was their hereditary foe, the non-slaveholder, "the poor white trash," as shiftless and open-mouthed as the blacks he hated, but proud of his color, and possessed of not a little political information and shrewdness, even if he were not often owner of a sufficient freehold to give him a vote. It was a typical, though somewhat swollen, Virginian court-day crowd; but, although his friends and neighbors preponderated, John Randolph must have had considerable pluck when he rose to make his maiden speech before them.

We do not know what the two orators said, although Wirt and Mr. Garland have constructed speeches for them in what was once an approved style. It is said that one James Adams "rose upon a platform that had been erected by the side of the tavern porch where Mr. Henry was seated, and proclaimed, 'Oyes, oyes! Colonel Henry will address the people from this stand, for the last time and at the risk of his life!'"<sup>1</sup> We are further informed that the grand jury, who were in session at the moment, burst through the courthouse doors, or leaped from the windows, and came running up to the crowd that they might not lose a word from the lips of the "old man eloquent."

Henry's plea for liberty combined with order

<sup>1</sup> Garland's Randolph, I. 131.



melted the crowd to tears; and as he sank back at its close, a Presbyterian clergyman, Dr. John H. Rice, started the metaphors rolling by exclaiming, "The sun has set in all his glory." Whereupon, in order that the audience might not be left in total and cimmerian darkness, an evening star appeared in the person of a young gentleman, tall, slender, effeminate-looking, with light hair combed back into a cue, with a "pale countenance, a beardless chin, bright, quick hazel eye, blue frock, buff small-clothes, and fair top-boots."<sup>1</sup>

Tradition, or his ruffle-shirted biographer, — it makes little difference which, — has it that "for some moments he stood in silence, his lips quivering, his eye swimming in tears." Let us trust the biographer, and believe that he felt the solemnity of the occasion, and that he appreciated the moral greatness of his venerable opponent. It would be, perhaps, too much to expect that he should have refrained from an *argumentum ad hominem* based on Henry's change of front; for he spoke three hours and a half, and he could hardly have confined himself for so long a period to discussing the iniquities of the Federalists, great as they were.

Whatever his themes and method of handling them, he not only delighted his audience, but astounded them. He did not in all probability make

<sup>1</sup> Garland's Randolph, I. 129.

much use of epigrams or the long, pointed finger; he is more likely to have used long sentences; but he doubtless understood the temper of a Virginian crowd, and managed to appeal adroitly to their patriotism, their conservatism, and their sense of humor. The Reverend Doctor Moses D. Hoge, himself an orator of no mean ability, is said to have gone away muttering:

“And still the wonder grew  
That one small head could carry all he knew.”<sup>1</sup>

Patrick Henry is said to have observed to a bystander, “I haven’t seen the little dog before since he was at school; he was a great atheist then.” Liberalism in politics meant for many in those days liberalism in religion, just as liberalism in social thought often does now. But Henry had some excuse for his taunt; since Randolph was not unfamiliar with the French deism then fashionable among Virginia gentlemen, and was never free from a taint of blatancy. The veteran was, however, quite complimentary to his young opponent at the close of the debate, and gave him some good advice, which Randolph did not take, although he

<sup>1</sup> None of these details is to be taken too seriously. Judge Beverley Tucker, Randolph’s half-brother, in a scathing review of Garland’s “Life,” published in the *Southern Quarterly Review* for 1851, ridicules this very statement about Dr. Hoge, and declares that he could not have been present at the debate.

henceforth cherished the memory of his great forerunner.

With not a little inconsistency, the good people of Charlotte cast their votes both for Patrick Henry and for John Randolph. Perhaps the scarlet coat of his opponent, Mr. Powhatan Bolling, may have helped Randolph; but his plucky speech certainly did, and he began a congressional career of over a quarter of a century, in which he suffered only one defeat.

At least one admirer expected great things of him; for John Thompson had written to his brother William, "Our friend John Randolph *offers* for Congress, and will probably be elected. He is a brilliant and noble young man. He will be an object of admiration and terror to the enemies of liberty." By enemies of liberty Mr. Thompson meant the Federalists, not Messrs. Jefferson and Madison; yet it was to the latter rather than to the former that Randolph was destined to be an object of terror, and he never was much of an object of admiration save to the callow youths of his own Old Dominion.

Certainly he began his congressional career at Philadelphia in a way calculated to make only a ridiculous impression. In a speech on a motion to repeal the Act for augmenting the army, while defending the thesis always dear to Virginia planters and English country gentlemen, that a state

should not depend on enlisted soldiers, he applied to these latter objects of youthful and feminine admiration the rather insulting and unnecessary epithet of "ragamuffins." On the evening of the same day he was rudely jostled at a theatre by a party of officers. It is not quite clear that they knew who he was; but Randolph assumed that his inviolability as a legislator had been assailed, and brought the matter to the notice of President John Adams in a letter remarkable for republican simplicity of ascription and for romantic bombast of phrasing.

Adams sent the note to the House with slight comment, whereupon the matter was referred to a committee, who treated it in a way not calculated to soothe Randolph's feelings. He was practically censured by the House for having applied to the President instead of to that body for redress, and his assailants got off without even a censure. Probably there was a little party malice visible in this treatment of a Virginian Republican, and perhaps the House would have shown itself more zealous in inquiring into the matter if a Federalist had been the object of a supposed attack; but the whole affair, as Mr. Adams notes, must have done Randolph good, though it gave little indication that the rash young man would become leader of the House as soon as Congress removed to the new Federal village of Washington. A

glance at the bombastic letters Randolph was then writing to Bryan and William Thompson would have confirmed the unfavorable prognostications to be legitimately drawn from the theatre incident.

But a change was at hand that was to make all things new. Mr. Jefferson was to succeed John Adams. The country was to be renovated, and John Randolph along with it. True, Mr. Jefferson's election was in doubt when Randolph first came to Washington, and the latter revealed some queer feelings with regard to the idol of Virginia Republicans; but he soon settled down into an efficient working member under the guidance of his astute relative. In the first Congress under the new administration Nathaniel Macon, Randolph's almost life-long friend, was elected Speaker; and he promptly placed Randolph at the head of the most important committee of the House, that of Ways and Means.

Events showed that the simple and honest North Carolinian had not been over-dazzled by the brilliancy of his young Virginian friend. It was a time for new men, since a new party was in power; and Madison and Gallatin, the chief Republicans with political experience, had been needed in the Cabinet. Macon himself, a typical representative of the honest but scarcely brilliant or interesting democracy of his native State, had succeeded by force of character to a chair which

at that time demanded rather the qualities of a moderator, after the English type of speaker, than those of a party leader, after the American type introduced by Henry Clay. For leader of the House, the chairman of the most important committee was naturally the person to be relied on; and for leadership Randolph's aggressive qualities were in demand. The combination of Randolph-Macon (since rather humorously preserved by a worthy Methodist college in Virginia) was not, then, as remarkable a one as we might judge from the divergent characters of the two men; nor was their friendship inexplicable, on the well-known principle, in the matters of human likes and dislikes, of attraction between opposites.

The new chairman began his career by moving an investigation of the judiciary. John Adams and the Federalists had put John Marshall in the Supreme Court, and had created new circuit judges who might be expected to interpret the Constitution according to Federalist principles. In some way this menace to republican liberty had to be neutralized, and it was decided to do away with the circuit judges.

Both Randolph and Jefferson probably felt that Marshall was not a man to be trifled with, and it is at least doubtful whether the former could have been induced to attack him. Much as he disliked Marshall's Federalist principles, Randolph always

liked the man ; and he was too good a Virginian not to relish the fact that a fellow-citizen of the " Old Dominion " was presiding over the highest court in the land. Besides, a personal attack was more obnoxious to Republican principles than an attack on a new system of courts, which could be rested on strictly constitutional grounds, as Randolph showed in his able replies to the Federalist leader, Bayard of Delaware.

Mr. Adams intimates that Randolph was at first in favor of overturning the whole judiciary system, Supreme Court included, but he cites no authority ; and Randolph, in his speech of Feb. 19, 1802, in reply to Bayard, expressly stated that that was the first time he had ever heard of such a design. Randolph, though " in harness," was in the habit of telling the truth, whether pleasant or not ; and I am at least inclined to doubt whether he felt as violently toward Marshall as Jefferson did. If he did not, it is pretty plain that he would not have permitted himself to be drawn into an attack on one great Virginian by another.

As has been intimated, Randolph was no worshipper of Mr. Jefferson — indeed, it seems plain that he was a little jealous of him ; and while in his new position of leader he showed himself somewhat docile at first, his subsequent career proves clearly that nothing could have driven him to take any stand in this judiciary matter that

his conscience did not approve. For, narrow and impracticable as many of his political convictions were, Randolph always had the courage of them; and those were days when independence in politics was more common than it is now. We may be certain, from the natures of the two men, that whatever the President got out of the leader of the House was obtained by astute management, and not by dictation. We may be equally certain that the Federalists did not long maintain any illusions as to the ability of the beardless stripling who undertook to reply to their champion from Delaware.

Whether or not Randolph was in favor of attacking Marshall and the Supreme Court, it is evident from his later speeches<sup>1</sup> that he regarded the advent to power of the Republican party in 1801 as a proper occasion for a good many sweeping reforms, — at any rate, for some high-sounding proclamations as to the unconstitutionality of the Alien and Sedition laws, *et cetera*. He seriously believed with Jefferson that the Federalists were tainted with monarchical principles, and that the country had been saved from tyranny so as by fire.

But Jefferson found himself checked by prudent men like Gallatin and Madison, as well as by Northern democrats, who were compelled by their isolated position to be somewhat more chary

<sup>1</sup> See H. Adams's "History of the United States," I. 260.



in their utterances and conservative in their acts than their Southern brethren of the faith. It is no wonder, then, to find Jefferson tending toward conservatism, and relying more and more on Northern support; while Randolph, with a pocket district and a leading State practically behind him, could afford to stick closely to his original principles of republican simplicity and hatred for strong government.

His social theories of a landed aristocracy did not in the least conflict, it will be noted, with his republicanism. The Virginia barons were as ready to put down King John Adams as their English prototypes had been to impose the great Charter upon another and less virtuous John; for were they not certain of their own social standing and political power inside Virginia, provided the general government could be kept within legitimate bounds?

Alas! the Virginia barons, Randolph among the first, were soon to find that, expelling King John, they had set up King Thomas—King Stork for King Log; only Randolph, knowing some English history, and seeing perhaps some faint analogy between Republicanism and the Holy Catholic Church, preferred to speak of St. Thomas of Cantingbury.

It would be idle to attempt to enumerate all Randolph's votes and speeches in the first session

of the Seventh Congress. He discussed the proposed mausoleum to Washington, the public printing, the library of Congress, jurisdiction over the District of Columbia; and he had his say on more important matters, such as the Apportionment Bill. He had, further, to master Gallatin's financial schemes for the reduction of taxes, and to defend them in the House,—the true limit perhaps, as Mr. Adams maintains, of his responsibility to his party, but a proof at the same time of his great importance to that party.

He was in training, as the same biographer has shown, and, until his waywardness wrecked his career, was looked upon as a possible successor to Gallatin; but through it all he never ceased to speak out for himself, and to maintain the simon-pure principles of the Virginia wing of Republicans. No clearer utterance on the subject of State sovereignty can be found than his argument of Dec. 18, 1801, apropos of the Apportionment Bill, against the "doctrine which considered" the "House as the Representatives of the people;" but side by side with this it is well to put the peroration of his speech of Feb. 19, 1802, on the Judiciary Establishment (too harshly criticised by Mr. Adams), in which he protested against the idea of a dissolution of the Union in words which he might have recalled with profit later in his career. I cannot forbear to quote

them both for their intrinsic value, and for the evidence they afford of the fact that Randolph's style was passing from the callow, bombastic stage into something like the effective, trenchant stage of his maturity: —

“Is the idea of a separation of these States so light and trifling an affair, as to be uttered with calmness in this deliberate assembly? At the very idea I shudder, and it seems to me that every man ought to look on such a scene with horror, and shrink from it with dismay. Yet some gentlemen appear to be prepared for such an event, and have determined on their sides in case it should happen. For my part, sir, I deplore such an event too much to make up my mind on it until it shall really happen, and then it must be done with great hesitation indeed. To my imagination the idea of disunion conveys the most painful sensations; how much more painful, then, would be the reality! Who shall fix the boundaries of these new empires, when the fatal separation shall take place? Is it to be done with those cruel engines of death that we have heard of, the sword, the bayonet, and the more savage instruments of tomahawk and hatchet? And is the arm of the brother to plunge them into the heart of brother, and citizen to be put in battle-array against citizen, to make this separation which would ruin the whole country? And why is all this to be done? Because we cannot all think alike on political topics!”<sup>1</sup>

With such sentiments Randolph wound up his service in the third session of his long career. As his most recent biographer well puts it: “Con-

<sup>1</sup> Benton's “Abridgment,” II. 631.

gress had done good work under his directions. The internal taxes were abolished and half the government patronage cut off; the army and navy suffered what Mr. Jefferson called a 'chaste reformation;' the new Federalist judiciary was swept away."

The qualifications that Mr. Adams allows himself to make to this enumeration of services, viz., that no dangerous power had been expressly limited, and that Randolph only saw and deplored the fact later, whatever may be its weight, is certainly one of those qualifications that are easy to make *after* the fact.

Returning to Washington, December, 1802, Randolph found that his *bête noir*—Napoleon, and his diplomatic relative, Jefferson—had given him plenty of work to do. Napoleon was engaged in crushing Toussaint, and in planning to secure his new acquisition of Louisiana. Spain had put an end to the right of deposit at New Orleans, and the Western country was on fire with excitement. Mr. Jefferson was endeavoring to face both ways, to threaten war and maintain peace, to manage Kentucky and New England with one hand, and both Spain and Napoleon with the other.

The irony of the situation is increased by the fact that he succeeded by the aid of John Randolph, the most unmanageable of men, and of Napoleon, the most militant, grasping, and un-

yielding. Of course we cannot here go into the details of this first stage in the Louisiana business. It is sufficient to say that Randolph managed to get the House to pass into secret session in spite of the public excitement; that he aided Jefferson to talk war in one message and peace in another (a course very similar to one he refused to take a little later); that he kept the Western men quiet and the Federalists powerless; and, finally, that he got the House to vote two millions for a rather indefinite purpose, which was, nevertheless, understood to be the securing of the mouth of the Mississippi. It is a little curious to read Randolph's patriotic remarks about the importance of the great river in view of his subsequent attitude toward the West; but it may be noted that they were adroitly intermingled with praise of a then favorite Virginia worthy, Monroe, who had defeated a scheme in the Continental Congress to barter Mississippi navigation rights for Spanish commercial privileges.

Randolph succeeded in making the House listen to page after page from the reports of the Virginia Convention of 1788; and he also succeeded in giving the Federalists some home thrusts, and in arguing cleverly with regard to the impropriety of treating Spain with disrespect in the delicate business now in hand. He was right, on the whole, in this last particular; but it is hard to

help thinking that he would have found it more congenial to lash both Spain and France, as well as Kentucky and New England, with his audacious tongue.

With regard to the constitutionality of the proposed purchase of the island of New Orleans and of East and West Florida, he seems to have had no scruples, or else to have thought it best to hold his tongue; but he had no hesitation, about the same period, in indulging in a typically Republican attack on the mint, an indication of the fact that he could not always keep his free-lance propensities within bounds.

In October, 1803, at the beginning of the Eighth Congress, Napoleon and Jefferson furnished Randolph with still more to do; and he had during the summer been warned that he might have no less a business on his hands than the impeachment of a justice of the Supreme Court. But the Louisiana Purchase, so unexpectedly and luckily made, demanded his first attention. He managed to get the Federalist request for documents to be furnished by the Executive frustrated by a narrow vote; and he then delivered himself as to the constitutionality of the purchase in a way that ought to have been repugnant, but seemingly was not, to every strict constructionist that heard him. He was more in line with his principles when he showed his jealousy of executive power by car-

rying an amendment to the proposed act which limited the President's control over the province to the period covered by the then session of Congress.

Dangers resulting from loose construction of the Constitution were evidently less conspicuous to him than dangers that might result from the tyrannical use of executive power. Tyranny exercised by St. Thomas of Cantingbury has a humorous sound. As it was, Randolph allowed Quincy of Massachusetts to press the unconstitutionality of the whole Louisiana negotiation, — to press it even to the utterance of his famous threat of secession, “peaceably if we can, forcibly if we must.” Then, to quote Mr. Adams, “having swallowed without even a grimace this enormous camel” of unconstitutional increase of territory, he “next strained at a gnat” of supposed executive encroachments, in the end allowing “the President to govern Louisiana with the powers of a king of Spain until a rebellion became imminent.”

He concluded his queer but powerfully successful course by carrying through a bill based upon an unfounded interpretation of the treaty of purchase, which actually annexed the whole coast of Florida on the Gulf, thus giving an occasion for war to the very same Spain whose sensibilities he had been so anxious to avoid wounding not a year

before. In this action he was not so inconsistent, however, as might at first appear; for a war with Spain was disagreeable neither to him nor to any other Southern man, while Florida, under Spanish rule, hemmed in Georgia.

A glance at the index of Benton's "Abridgment" for the years 1803 to 1808 will reveal the fact that Randolph was not merely one of the most important men in Congress, but that he consumed a large share of the attention of that body by discussing all manner of subjects. He argued as a strict constructionist against allowing a remission of the duties on books imported by colleges in a way paralleled in its banality only by Jefferson Davis's subsequent opposition to the purchase of the manuscript of Washington's "Farewell Address." He opposed the bridging of the Potomac by congressional action, he discussed the duty on salt, he advocated a repeal of the Bankrupt Law. But his most mighty efforts were directed toward the impeachment of Judge Chase, and the confounding of the schemes of the Yazoo claimants, — efforts which brought about his political fall.

As to the trial of Chase, it is easy to see that Randolph was led into the trap by a combination of vanity, or else ingenuousness, on his own part, and shifty astuteness on the part of Mr. Jefferson. The latter wished, and indeed suggested, the prosecution of the Federalist justice whose recent



utterances on political subjects had gone to the verge of decency as well as of recalcitrancy. But Mr. Jefferson wished to keep out of sight and danger, now that his popularity was at its flood tide; and Randolph's friend, Joseph H. Nicholson of Maryland, who had conducted the prosecution of Judge Pickering, was now a candidate for judiciary honors, and thought it best not to take the lead in the new affair. Mr. Adams infers, probably from Randolph's temper and his desire to play a part similar to that of Burke in the trial of Warren Hastings (another inference), that the hot-headed Virginian willingly relieved Jefferson and Nicholson of the task of bringing Chase to justice. But granting Randolph's hot-headedness and vanity, it is also open to us to believe that he despised Judge Chase, and feared the effects of his intolerant acts and utterances to such an extent that he fully persuaded himself, not merely of the justice, but of the expediency, of the impeachment.

Bad temper, vanity, and certain ludicrous and humorous elements are undoubtedly discoverable in Randolph's conduct throughout this rather farcical trial; but a considerable element of sincerity may be observed as well. The stages of the impeachment, which was interfered with by the weightier matter of Louisiana, need not detain us, though they are not without their amusing features, which Mr. Adams makes the most of. Suffice it to say

that, after a long debate, an inquiry into Chase's conduct was ordered, and that on March 26, 1804, a committee, with Randolph and Nicholson at their head, reported certain articles of impeachment, covering the two scandalous cases of Fries and Callender, as well as the indecent and absurd charge to the grand jury at Baltimore that had drawn down Jefferson's wrath. The session of Congress then came to an end; and the trial went over until Feb. 9, 1805, when it began in the Senate-chamber, which had been solemnly arranged for what was to be a somewhat ludicrous spectacle.

Randolph came to his task of leading the prosecution in a temper by no means prophetic of success. He had just been in a nasty fight with the Yazoo men, to be soon described; and he had evidently passed the previous summer in political, if not in domestic, irritation. William Thompson, who had been something of a trial to him, had, nevertheless, always excited his sympathies; and this unfortunate young man had recently died. There were probably other troubles at home that pressed upon him; but as Mr. Garland prefers at this period to give us his own flowing sentences, instead of quoting from his manuscript materials, we are forced to rely on stray evidence, such as the two letters to Nicholson and Gallatin, given by Mr. Adams, for any available information as to

his mental condition. These letters indicate a certain amount of discontent with his political situation, and a disposition to criticize rather harshly and inconsistently the President's conduct of affairs.

They should not be taken too seriously, however; and it is perhaps safe to conclude, that, after all, it was his struggle with the Yazoo men that not only limited Randolph's efficiency in the prosecution of Chase, but also taught the President and a majority of the Republicans that they must look for another leader. Mere inconsistent utterances on the subject of the navy, and wishes to blow British frigates out of the water, and mere inchoate jealousy of Mr. Jefferson's popularity, would not have caused the latter to get rid of a follower who had shown himself so efficient a leader in the Louisiana matter, and so zealous a friend in need in the Chase affair.

The trial of Judge Chase decided, in many important respects, the question whether it would pay any party to make an open attack upon the judiciary, rather than to resort to the less aggressive policy of packing the bench. It decided, also, the question whether the Republicans would ever carry into effect the threats of punishment they had often made against the more or less treasonable actions and utterances of the extreme Federalists. If any Federalist could be and ought

to be punished, it was Judge Chase; and if any Republican could be and ought to be the instrument of retribution, it was John Randolph, Jefferson not having the necessary directness, and being excused from the task by his position.

But Chase escaped punishment, and Randolph failed. The easy-going temper of the American people as represented in the Senate, the cumbrous and intangible nature of the charges brought, and Randolph's own failure to rise to the height of the occasion, all account for the result. On not a single one of the eight counts (which had been altered and added to by the House in December) was the necessary two-thirds vote obtained; although it is plain that, had Randolph followed Jefferson's advice, and rested the case for the prosecutors on the harangue delivered by Chase at Baltimore, a conviction might by a bare possibility have been obtained. The vote on this charge, which filled the eighth count, stood nineteen guilty against fifteen not guilty. The lugging in of the cases of Fries and Callender, not only gave an aspect of vindictiveness to the prosecution, both cases being now some years old, but also gave great opportunity to Chase's legal counsel to ring the changes on technical points of law.

On such points Randolph, who was easily the ablest of the prosecutors, was no match for Luther Martin, who was easily the ablest of his opponents.

Nor was Randolph, mentally excited and physically ill as he seems to have been, at all equal to the task of bringing out the strength of his own side with regard to the eighth article. I cannot entirely share Mr. Adams's admiration for Luther Martin's speech; nor do I thoroughly sympathize with his contempt for Randolph's harangues, which are interpreted in the light of J. Q. Adams's criticism; but it is easy to see that the prosecutors were overmatched in strictly legal acumen, and that every circumstance was against them. Randolph failed to become an American Burke; but he partly owes it to his failure to reach this questionable eminence that he did become afterwards the most individual and personally dreaded orator that this, or perhaps any other, country has produced. The reputations of Juvenal and John Randolph, if not enviable, are at least secure.

With regard now to the Yazoo claims, it will be impossible, in the space at my command, to go into special details, which would not, indeed, be warranted at this distance of time. There was undoubtedly justice in the plea put forward that there had been much money innocently invested in lands whose title was supposed to be guaranteed by the legally constituted Legislature of Georgia. Arguments in favor of the claimants might be based, too, on the clause in the Constitution forbidding any State to pass laws impairing the ob-

ligation of contracts; although *Fletcher vs. Peck*, in which this clause was actually used against the rescinding Act of Georgia, was not decided until 1810.

It is true, further, that the claims of individuals and companies could be settled without loss to Georgia out of the lands ceded to the general government by that State in 1802. The fact that moderate men like Gallatin and Madison favored a compromise is also to be taken into account. On the other hand, it is plain that there had been a vast amount of speculation in the claims, and that, as in the case of Hamilton's famous assumptions, any compromise would inure to the benefit of shrewd speculators rather than of *bona fide* investors. It is also apparent that there was a good deal of jobbery going on in and around Congress to secure favorable votes, and that one official at least, Gideon Grainger, the Postmaster-General, had used his patronage in favor of the claimants in a way which, if not corrupt, was at least indecent.

From a States'-rights point of view, moreover, if not from a common-sense consideration of the whole matter, it was not unreasonable to hold at the time that Georgia's rescinding Act was the only course left to a State whose vital interests had been sacrificed and betrayed by a set of scoundrels. Southern States have argued in a similar

way since with regard to debts contracted in the period of reconstruction by corrupt legislatures.

Randolph, then, was standing by his principles, and was acting in accordance with the more generous qualities of his nature, when he introduced his resolutions against the compromise on Feb. 20, 1804, and managed to postpone legislation for a year. That he was not truckling for office to the great men in power is, at any rate, plain enough, as Mr. Adams, whose account I mainly follow, clearly shows. It is equally plain that, if he had kept his temper within bounds, and conducted his campaign adroitly, he might have won a complete victory, and at the same time secured his ascendancy in the Republican ranks.

But he came back to Congress in the fall of 1804 in an ugly temper, as we have seen; and he threw diplomacy to the winds when the claims came up again. He succeeded once more in preventing action by the then Congress, but he alienated the Northern section of his party, lost his leadership, and fell headlong from the battlements of the executive heaven, the faithful Abdiel Madison giving a rather discordant chuckle at the catastrophe. As in the case of Lucifer, our sympathies are rather with Randolph; and it can hardly be doubted that, if he lost the support of the administration and the Northern Democrats, he strengthened his hold upon Virginia and upon strict constructionists generally.

But true statesmanship, while it does not require a sacrifice of principles, does require a careful husbanding and use of means; and it can hardly be denied that Randolph, in his violence, threw away his at least fair chances to deal the corruptionists, as well as the looser elements of his party, a deadly blow. It was his duty to frustrate Granger, but he did not need to vilify him; and a little more policy in conciliating his opponents would not have debarred him from asserting his indignation at widespread corruption. In the history of American oratory, however, we should miss the following passage:—

“When I advert to the applicants by whom we were then beset, I find that among them was one of the very persons who style themselves agents of the New England Mississippi Land Company, who seems to have an unfortunate knack at buying bad titles. His gigantic grasp embraces with one hand the shores of Lake Erie, and stretches with the other to the Bay of Mobile. Millions of acres are easily digested by such stomachs. Goaded by avarice, they buy only to sell, and sell only to buy. One retail trader of fraud and imposture yields too small and slow a profit to gratify their cupidity. They buy and sell corruption in the gross; and a few millions, more or less, is hardly felt in their account. The deeper the play, the greater their zest for the game; and the stake which is set upon their throw is nothing less than the patrimony of the people.”

Randolph took his defeats very bravely, and in his vacation in Virginia had the sense to see into



the plots of Burr, Dayton, and Wilkinson before they became apparent to Mr. Jefferson. The early announcement of that gentleman's purpose to retire from the presidency disturbed him, however; for that seemed to favor the candidacy of Madison, a Yazoo man. He would have preferred Monroe; but diplomatic failures abroad, for which Madison and Jefferson were chiefly responsible, were to keep Monroe in the background for some years to come. These diplomatic complications were also to embarrass Mr. Jefferson, and to give Randolph a chance to show his claws. The President wished to play his old game of two messages, one public and belligerent, the other private and containing a request for two millions to be used in the purchase of Florida.

But Randolph was not "in harness" now, and not likely to co-operate with this astute project. Macon was again Speaker, and Randolph was again chairman of the Committee of Ways and Means. The latter's support was therefore most desirable; but he dashed about the House, "booted, riding-whip in hand," inveighing against what he conceived to be a mean policy, fathered in reality by his *bête noir*, Madison. He called his committee together, and construed the secret message in a sense just the reverse of what was intended; he also visited Madison and the President, and not only perplexed but defied them. He actually rode

off to Baltimore and stayed a week, his committee doing nothing; and to make matters worse he had a good deal of right on his side, for the policy he was asked to carry through was nothing more than "a mean attempt to bribe one nation [France] to rob another" [Spain]. When he did again call his committee together he induced it to refuse the required grant, and to make a war-like report against Spain.

This he failed to get passed by the House; for the Northern Democrats, led by Bidwell of Massachusetts, whom Jefferson wished to make leader in Randolph's place, stood by the President, and voted the millions. Then, when the doors of the House were thrown open, the public was treated to the spectacle of John Randolph leading the opposition. He did not spare his old associates; and, unfortunately for themselves, their tortuous policy gave him only too many opportunities to develop his genius for sarcasm and invective. His famous speech of March 5, 1806, struck at the President and the Cabinet in a way to make such a lover of peace and popularity as Jefferson fairly writhe; and he immortalized smaller men by his reference to "Church's Cough-drops" and "Sloan's Vegetable Specific." Meanwhile, the Federalists applauded pro-British sentiments that he would hardly have uttered when John Adams was President; and we, of this late day, take pleasure in

picturing him to ourselves, as, with skinny finger extended, he shrieked at the astounded Northern Democrats his insulting query, "After shrinking from the Spanish jackal, do you presume to bully the British lion?" Poor Mr. Jefferson, poor Mr. Church, poor Mr. Sloan, — and poor John Randolph! — the whole of you cut but a sorry figure.

Of course Messrs. Sloan and Company tried to reply to this remarkable tirade, but they failed signally to keep up the pace which the Virginian madman had set. They could time him accurately, and refer to his two hour and forty-eight minute speech, but that was all; and when he came at them again and again, they and their allies had little more than a solid phalanx of votes with which to oppose him. But the votes counted, and even his own supporters gradually fell away from him; and the star of Madison, the Yazoo man, rose brighter and clearer.

The session which closed April 21, 1806, drew the curtain down on Randolph's career as a constructive statesman. How could it have been otherwise with a man who was not merely suspected of a design to impeach the Secretary of State, but caught plainly in the act of humiliating the House of Representatives itself? Perhaps he might have survived his attacks on Jefferson, Madison, and Sloan; he might even have out-

lived his war on the Yazoo men; but when "he kept back the appropriation bills till late in the session, and then rose to inform the House, with a contemptuous smile, that All Fools' Day was at hand, when, if they did not pass the bill for the support of government, they would look like fools indeed," he dug his political grave, and actually lay down in it. He had come too near speaking the truth to be permitted to walk again, save as a political ghost.

A systematic review of Randolph's career as a free lance is naturally out of the question. His first serious efforts against the administration, after he had relieved his primary paroxysms of wrath by his tirades in the House, were directed against Madison's candidacy and in support of Monroe's. As we have seen, Monroe's candidacy was soon to be a forlorn hope, chiefly through Madison's hardly intelligible diplomacy; but neither Randolph nor John Taylor of Carolina perceived this at first.

Randolph wrote most flattering letters to this last hope of the Virginian straight-outs, and Monroe's head ought to have been turned. When, later on, Monroe's principles were turned by the seductions of a cabinet office under Madison and a clear succession to the presidency, Randolph ceased to indulge in flattery, although, to do him justice, he showed very little bitterness. By this

time he was used to loneliness, and perhaps he took a mournful pride in his position as the last and most consistent of the true Virginian Republicans.

Returning to Congress, he found himself an object of suspicion and hatred in many quarters, and he naturally let his temper go. He criticized the President for supineness in the Burr imbroglio, and impeded the passage of legislation prohibiting the slave-trade; but his chances for doing harm were curtailed when, at the close of the Ninth Congress, he lost the chairmanship of his committee. During the recess he served as foreman of the grand jury that indicted Burr. For this worthy he seems to have had too high a regard at one time; but it is certainly to his credit that he took a violent dislike to that James Wilkinson who has earned the unenviable distinction of being in all probability the meanest man in our history.

In Congress once more, he found that even Macon and Nicholson would no longer stand by his side; and he outdid himself in violence and in contradiction, being now willing, not merely to pull the British lion's tail, but to cut off two of its claws, Canada and Jamaica. Then he proceeded, after advocating an embargo on Dec. 18, to oppose it on the 19th as both unconstitutional and aimed against Great Britain. It is true that

he endeavored to furnish reasons for this astonishing change of front, but his reasons were as flimsy as his conduct was exasperating.

How far his physical and mental disorders were responsible for his conduct, it is of course impossible to say; but I am inclined to think that temper and a spirit of *diablerie* are more patent in his actions and speeches than actual madness. His astute use of Monroe and Clinton as tools against Madison show the selfishness of the intriguer rather than the cunning of the lunatic. But his astuteness recoiled upon himself; and his temper, frustrated in wreaking itself in revenge, began to drown itself in drink.

During Madison's first administration, there is little to record save Randolph's break with Monroe, which has been anticipated, much aggravation of his family difficulties, and his removal from Bizarre to Roanoke, — a place to be henceforth wrought into his name and into his character; for both in habitation and in actions he was to become a hermit, who broke out occasionally in a startling way upon the world. His opposition to the War of 1812 lost him his seat in Congress to John W. Eppes, Jefferson's son-in-law, but only for one term. In 1815 he was back again in what was, however, a changed political world. Clay and Calhoun and Webster were rising to the zenith of their glory; Madison

and Monroe had turned their backs on the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions; John Marshall had rendered many of his most important centralizing decisions; and the States'-rights cause had no leader save Mr. Jefferson, who, in the shades of Monticello, had unlearned many of the lessons taught him by his executive experience, and was watching the rush of events with uneasy eyes.

The apparent era of good feeling was in reality merely a breathing-spell, in which North, South, and West stood measuring one another. Sooner or later one of the sections would stand out against the others, and would be compelled to rely on the constitutional weapons fashioned by the strict constructionists.

John Randolph saw his opportunity, and made effective use of it, — a fact which is accentuated, though in very different ways, by both his biographers, Garland and Adams. For the first time in his life perhaps, save in the Louisiana affair, Randolph began to look beyond the borders of Virginia, and to see that, if his own State had lost power and vitality, there was abundance of both in South Carolina and Georgia. Slavery would mean more to them than to Virginia, and slavery could stand only in close alliance with States'-rights. It was not in Randolph's nature to work this proposition out in cold logic, and develop a theory of nullification, or write a "Disquisition

on Government," or a "Construction Construed;"<sup>1</sup> but he perceived the truth as by intuition, and he proclaimed it in season and out of season, in the midst of his vituperative harangues or of his drunken monologues, in his tilts with Henry Clay and in his personal overtures to Calhoun.

It is true that he did not see, with the latter, that an assault on the slave-trade in the District was a blow to slavery in the States; nor was he always consistent with himself, as when he emancipated his slaves in 1822 and revoked his action in 1832, reverting to his former determination on his death-bed. But contradictions, bad habits, disease, and eccentricities to the contrary notwithstanding, Randolph's career from 1815 to his death is remarkably consistent.

It would be idle to dwell at length on any special phases of this third stage of his career. He opposed the various tariffs, stood firm against the Missouri Compromise and quarrelled with Clay in the matter, flung his taunts at North and West alike, but made friendly overtures to Massachusetts, attacked John Quincy Adams whenever the least opportunity occurred, gave Calhoun lessons in States'-rights by long rambling speeches delivered during his single partial senatorial session 1825-1827 (when every person, nearly, would leave the chamber save the Vice-President and

<sup>1</sup> By Calhoun and John Taylor of Carolina respectively.



the amused listeners in the galleries), supported Jackson vigorously and fought a duel with Clay, berated the Western men and denounced democracy in the Virginia Convention of 1829-1830, and finally startled the world and scandalized his friends by accepting the Russian Mission in September, 1829, sailing the next June, spending ten days at his post and a year in England, and returning to draw \$21,407 salary, to be used in paying old debts, in utter obliviousness, it would seem, of his famous boast in his speech on "Retrenchment and Reform," that he wanted no "foreign mission, to dance attendance abroad instead of at home." Perhaps he might have saved his consistency by averring that a ten days' dance and an abrupt leave-taking were perfectly consonant with his republican principles.

In all this fifteen years of free-lancing, there was a consistency that is apparent enough when one ceases to read his numerous speeches merely for the purpose of culling from them humorous metaphors or cutting epithets. His strenuous opposition to the proposed restriction of slavery in Missouri and to Clay's compromises was prophetic of the position to be taken by extreme pro-slavery leaders nearly a generation later. His opposition to North and West lay deeper than the tariff question that brought it to the surface, and showed that, mad as he might seem to be, Randolph saw

the radical sectional division of the country, at which politicians who were regarded as saner than he merely blinked.

He made mistakes, of course, as when he advocated Jackson's election; but Calhoun and South Carolina made the same. He was often grossly unjust, too, in his suspicions and aspersions, as when he maintained the corruptness of Clay's so-called bargain with Adams. He was often maudlin and rambling in his harangues, often indecent and boring; but through it all he managed to steer a pretty clear course toward the goal which the South was to set for itself, — the maintenance of the alliance between slavery and States'-rights.

Randolph was also outspoken on another matter about which most Southern leaders preferred to keep quiet. He saw that slavery and a South built up on the States'-rights doctrines of 1798 would have little chance if democracy were substituted for aristocracy. On this point he seems to have been even more clear-sighted than Jefferson himself, who had desired to spread democracy, yet keep the general government and the States in their same relative positions.

Randolph saw that this was impossible; hence he opposed the West, though he allied himself with Jackson for a moment, and was a tower of strength to the tide-water aristocrats in their struggle in the Virginia Convention of 1829 and 1830 against the

democrats from the frontier counties. He declared in this body, as his half-brother Beverley Tucker afterwards declared with regard to the whole Union, that if he were a young man he would leave the State — he would not live under the dominion of King Numbers. No, for King Numbers was certain to subvert the reign of King States'-Rights and Queen Slavery.

On leaving the Convention he predicted that the compromise Constitution adopted would not last twenty years, because it was too democratic; whereas, in fact, it took just that time to modify it in a still more democratic direction. He was not always a good prophet in minor matters, nor was he always consistent; but he cannot be deprived of his right to be considered the real link, so far as active politics went, — for John Taylor was mainly a theorist, — between the Resolution of 1798, and the Theory of Nullification of 1832.

Nor can Randolph be denied another claim to distinction which is often lost sight of. It is he, rather than Jefferson or Calhoun, who furnished the model on which the typical pro-slavery men of the period from 1830 to 1860 fashioned themselves. Jefferson was always too astute and mobile in his intellect, Calhoun was always too cold and logical, to suit the average Southerner. Randolph's fiery zeal, his stubborn consistency, his genius for invective, his thorough individuality, were much

more attractive. Even his eccentricities were more or less congenial, because the repression of free thought and speech in the South after 1830 tended to develop men with peculiarities often amounting to monomania. John Randolph's influence can be traced in many a wild Southern politician like Rhett, Hammond, or Toombs, or Henry A. Wise, and in such wild theorists as George Fitzhugh (who like Randolph was false to the Declaration of Independence), and other contributors to that farrago of pathetic nonsense known as pro-slavery literature. In his own State and district this influence still lingers, and has given birth to many a traditionary story, which, true or not, is usually pointed and witty, though not always to the credit of the man who called it out.

Such now, in outline, was the career of John Randolph. His visits to England, in which he played the Virginian nobleman, and took rather a snobbish delight in the aristocratic attentions paid to his eccentricities; his life at Roanoke among his slaves and constituents; his conversion from infidelity to an emotional Christianity of a type that has often brought on him the charge of insincerity; his fits of mental aberration, so pronounced as to induce even his best friends to question his sanity; his dramatic death at Philadelphia, that inspired the well-known verses of

Whittier, — all these topics belong to Randolph's biography, and make it fascinating, but have little place in a lecture such as this. Some description of his queer appearance toward the close of his life, and a few quotations from some of his typical speeches, will, however, serve to set him somewhat vividly before you; and Randolph's personality enters so deeply into his career that a vivid conception of its main features is more necessary than is the case with most statesmen.

With regard to his appearance, I quote a few paragraphs from a volume of sketches by F. W. Thomas, author of "*Clinton Bradshaw*," a novel that once had a little vogue.<sup>1</sup> Thomas saw him, an old man, walking along the streets of Baltimore, trying to get rid of some impertinent urchins who were following him in mixed awe and amusement. Our forgotten author took a good look at him, and described him as follows: <sup>2</sup> —

"His long thin legs, about as thick as a stout walking-cane, and of much such a shape, were encased in a pair of tight smallclothes, so tight that they seemed part and parcel of the limbs of the wearer. Handsome white stockings were fastened with great tidiness at the knees, by a small gold buckle, and over them, coming about half-way up the

<sup>1</sup> Thomas is a rather interesting minor author, who unfortunately wasted his powers as too many of the men of his time did.

<sup>2</sup> "*John Randolph of Roanoke, and Other Sketches of Character*," by F. W. Thomas, author of "*Clinton Bradshaw*," Philadelphia, A. Hart, 1853, pp. 14, 15.

calf, were a pair of what I believe are called hose, coarse and country-knit. He wore shoes. They were old-fashioned, and fastened also with buckles—huge ones. He trod like an Indian, without turning his toes out, but planking them down straight ahead. It was the fashion in those days to wear a fan-tailed coat with a small collar, and buttons far apart behind, and few on the breast. Mr. Randolph's were the reverse of all this, and, instead of his coat being fan-tailed, it was what we believe the knights of the needle call swallow-tailed; the collar was immensely large, the buttons behind were in kissing proximity, and they sat together as close on the breast of the garment as the feasters at a crowded public festival.

“His waist was remarkably slender, so slender that, as he stood with his arms akimbo, he could easily, as I thought, with his long bony fingers, have spanned it. Around him his coat, which was very tight, was held together by one button; and in consequence an inch or more of tape, to which it was attached, was perceptible where it was pulled through the cloth. About his neck he wore a large white cravat, in which his chin was occasionally buried as he moved his head in conversation; no shirt-collar was perceptible; every other person seemed to pride himself upon the size of his, as they were then worn large. Mr. Randolph's complexion was precisely that of a mummy; withered, saffron, dry, and bloodless; you could not have placed a pin's point on his face where you would not have touched a wrinkle. His lips were thin, compressed, and colorless; the chin, beardless as a boy's, was broad for the size of his face, which was small; his nose was straight, with nothing remarkable in it, except, perhaps, it was too short. . . . Mr. Randolph's hair was remarkably fine; fine as an infant's, and thin. It was very long, and was parted with great care on the top of his head, and was tied behind with

a bit of black ribbon, about three inches from his neck ; the whole of it formed a queue not thicker than the little finger of a delicate girl.

“ His forehead was low, with no bumpology about it ; but his eye, though sunken, was most brilliant and startling in its glance. It was not an eye of profound, but of impulsive and passionate thought, with an expression at times such as physicians describe to be that of insanity.”

Apart from its eccentric English, this description is a good one, and tallies well with numerous other descriptions by eye-witnesses that are extant. Indeed, the chief trouble one has in writing about Randolph is in choosing from a mass of material, much of which is untrustworthy. Especially is one at a loss to know what to say about his voice, so important to an orator : all authorities agree in pronouncing it to have been peculiar, but to some, chiefly Virginians, it was angelically delightful ; to others, chiefly New Englanders, it was diabolically squeaky. The truth probably lies between.

In citing from his speeches, one is equally at a loss to know what to select. Here is a passage from his speech of Jan. 13, 1813, apropos of the war with England in the interest of Napoleon :—

“ But regardless of every consequence, we went into war with England, as an inconsiderate couple go into matrimony, without considering whether they have the means of sustaining their own existence, much less that of any unfortunate progeny that should happen to be born of them.

The sacrifice was made. The blood of Christians enjoying the privileges of jury trial, of the writ of *habeas corpus*, of the freedom of conscience, of the blessings of civil liberty, citizens of the last republic that ambition has left upon the face of a desolate earth, — the blood of such a people was poured out as an atonement to the Moloch of France. The Juggernaut of India is said to smile when it sees the blood flow from the human sacrifice which its worship exacts; the Emperor of France might now smile upon us. But no, sir, our miserable offering is spurned. The French monarch turns his nose and his eyes another way. He snuffs on the plains of Moscow a thousand hecatombs, waiting to be sacrificed on the shrine of his ambition; and the city of the Tzars, the largest in the world, is to be at once the altar and the fire of sacrifice to his miserable ambition.”<sup>1</sup>

The passage just quoted represents Randolph in one of his most connected and forcible speeches. Most of his harangues, however, were too much for the reporters, and we have to rely on descriptions. Mr. Adams quotes from Niles a most amusing account of a speech delivered in the Senate on a plan for making a bank, in which Randolph managed to refer to Unitarians, family Bibles, the presses of Oxford and Cambridge, the inferiority of books printed in America to those with the imprint of Cadell on the Strand, the folly of expurgating Shakspeare, the American Episcopal Church, wine-drinking *versus* whiskey-drinking, his lands at Roanoke, *et cetera*, — all of which oc-

<sup>1</sup> Benton's "Abridgment," IV. 686.



cupied thirty-five minutes of the Senate's time. But then, that body had to pay for its privilege of listening to such invective as : —

“I was defeated horse, foot, and dragoons, cut up and clean broke down by the coalition of Bliffl and Black George, by the combination, unheard of till then, of the Puritan with the blackleg ;” or of these foul words about Henry Clay : “this being so brilliant, yet so corrupt, which, like a rotten mackerel by moonlight, shined and stunk.”

I will not quote the celebrated retort on McLean of Delaware, or the attack on Mr. Beecher of *Cuckoo* memory ; but will remind you of a less known and, it must be confessed, less witty retort upon the gentleman who ventured in the House to amend one of Randolph's motions on military matters. The rash man had formerly been a watchmaker. Randolph looked at him a moment ; then, pulling out his watch, turned its face toward his opponent, and asked him what time it was. The victim told him. “Sir,” said Randolph, “you can mend my watch, but not my motions. You understand tic-tics, sir, but not tac-tics.”

But he could inject venom into his letters as well as into his speeches. Mr. Wirt had rather offended Randolph by the way he wormed out of him some information about Patrick Henry ; when, therefore, his famous life of that worthy appeared,

Randolph wrote of it to Key as follows: "I have seen, too, a romance called 'The Life of Patrick Henry,' a wretched piece of fustian." Yet, when he chose to be generous in his praise he could speak as nobly and truly as in these words on Washington in his speech on "Retrenchment and Reform:"—

"Who believes that Washington could write as good a book or report as Jefferson, or make as able a speech as Hamilton? Who is there that believes that Cromwell would have made as good a judge as Lord Hale? No, sir; these learned and accomplished men find their proper place under those who are fitted to command, and to command them among the rest. Such a man as Washington will say to a Jefferson, do you become my Secretary of State; to Hamilton, do you take charge of my purse, or that of the nation, which is the same thing; to Knox, do you be my master of the horse."

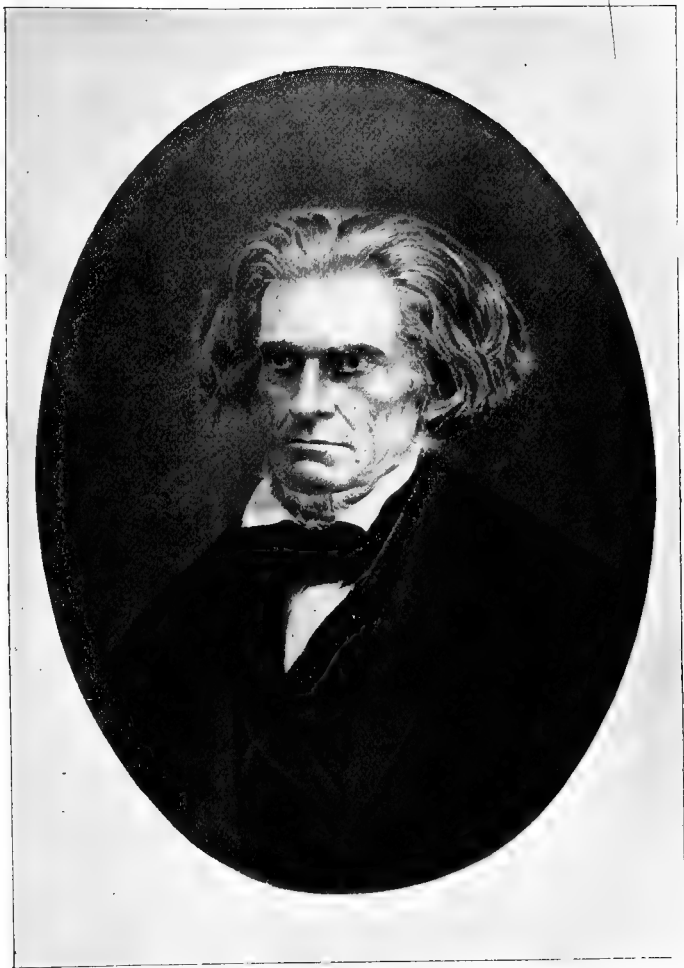
And now, what are we to say in conclusion of this man whose legislative career stretched from 1799 almost to his death in 1833; who began with the silly incidents in the theatre, and ended with the States'-rights resolutions against Jackson, and the Force Bill which he rammed down the unwilling throats of the people of Charlotte; who helped Mr. Jefferson to add Louisiana to the nation, but withstood the same worthy in the matter of Florida; who stirred even the mild Madison into temper, and goaded Clay into a duel;

who turned Calhoun from an opponent into a disciple; who never pointed his long finger without making some one tremble; who negotiated the alliance between States'-rights and the slave power? What can one say of him save that he is a combination of Ithuriel and Caliban?

JOHN CALDWELL CALHOUN.







JOHN C. CALHOUN.

## JOHN CALDWELL CALHOUN.<sup>1</sup>

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IF the two great statesmen, Washington and Jefferson, who have been treated in my previous lectures, belong more to the nation than to the South, the man whose career I am now about to discuss belongs, at least during the more important part of his life, pre-eminently to that region. Of purely Southern, and, therefore, sectional politics, John C. Calhoun was the coryphæus, — his like was not before him, nor has been since.

Yet even Calhoun himself is not, in all respects, a typical Southerner: he has not that peculiar flexibility and mobility of character that marks the average inhabitant of his section; his Scotch-Irish inherited qualities giving him a sort of stiffness and rigidity of temperament which, while not uncommon in the South, has never been typical of it. Yet though not entirely of the dominant planter-aristocrat class, which Dr. Von Holst has

<sup>1</sup> I have relied mainly on the lives by Jenkins and Von Holst, on the latter's "Constitutional History," and on Calhoun's "Works" in six volumes. I have also studied the nullification movement in original sources, and have found much help from South Carolina newspapers.



somewhat misleadingly dubbed the slavocracy, he was with them and for them, and was, in fact, their leader.

The mention of Dr. Von Holst, however, reminds me that I may as well say at the outset of this attempt to estimate Calhoun and his work, that I shall be able to add little or nothing to the admirable account of the great statesman's career which the scholarly professor has contributed to the well-known "American Statesmen" series. While, however, my conclusions are bound to be in the main those of Dr. Von Holst, I may be able to throw a tiny ray of light here and there upon certain obscure topics.

Of Calhoun as a man, we know next to nothing; since his private life was simple and retiring, and his hitherto published correspondence practically deals with politics only. His contemporaries were far from knowing or understanding him, so that their comments are of little value in estimating his character; and it is doubtful if we ever shall know him as we do most of his notable contemporaries. The mystery of genius, however, does not, in my opinion, overhang him; and his personality is hardly sufficiently attractive to make us long for any information that does not throw light on his political career. That, I confess, is for me the only point of importance with regard to Calhoun; for I cannot help believing that if he

had been a great man, *quà*, man, this fact would force itself upon us in a thousand ways, in personal anecdotes, and in little flashes of character in his published works.

I may, indeed, be utterly mistaken in this matter, but I think not. I am inclined to judge the greatness of men much as I judge the greatness of poetry, — both must appeal powerfully to my imagination in a noble and elevating way, nor will the possession of merely pathetic qualities suffice. Calhoun is a pathetic figure, but he is not inspiring, at least to me; and true genius, while it may be pathetic, is always inspiring. Calhoun lacked, I think, the power of creative and truthful imagination. His foresight was largely the result of deduction; and as his premises were always mixed with error, except in the matter of the antagonism between slavery and modern civilization, his foresight was of little practical service to himself or others. Where his foresight did not depend on deduction, it rested on apprehension. The foresight of the genuine seer, however, is creatively and truthfully imaginative; it enables him to visualize the future in the present, not as he would like to have it, but as it will and ought to be, and not merely for himself, but for others. Hence there can be no greater blessing to any people than to be possessed of a true political seer in any grave crisis; i.e., to have a statesman of genius.

It is the irony of fate that often the statesman of genius is a man of bad character, as, for example, Themistocles ; while his chief opponent possesses all the moral virtues, but lacks a creative imagination, as, for example, Aristides. Calhoun is in many ways the Aristides of our politics ; a breath of genius would have made him the Demosthenes. But the sturdy Scotch-Irish blood with its Puritan strain seems to give us talents rather than genius. Indeed Puritanism, wherever found, seems to run to talents rather than to genius ; and Cromwell, Milton, Hawthorne, are the exceptions that prove the rule. But I will not obtrude my speculations upon you ; let me rather give in outline the chief facts of Calhoun's life, and then proceed to comment upon them.

John Caldwell Calhoun was born March 18, 1782, in Abbeville district, South Carolina. His Scotch-Irish grandfather emigrated to Pennsylvania in 1735, removing thence to Virginia, and afterwards, in 1756, to South Carolina. His father, Patrick Calhoun, was a brave man and a great Indian fighter. He seems to have been a born particularist in politics, for he opposed the adoption of the Federal Constitution on the ground that it would enable the other States to tax South Carolina. The right of suffrage having been denied him on one occasion, he is said to have shouldered his rifle and obtained it.<sup>1</sup> He died in

<sup>1</sup> See Jenkins's life of Calhoun.

1795, but not before he had instilled some of his individualistic principles into his young son.

His father not believing much in education, that of Calhoun was neglected at first; but later on he made up for it under the direction of his brother-in-law, Dr. Waddell, a famous schoolmaster in his day. Entering Yale, he graduated in 1804, having disputed on politics with President Dwight in so able a manner that that worthy prognosticated his election to the presidency of the Union. Of more importance, as Dr. Von Holst remarks, was the influence of New England thought upon his early political opinions. He next studied law, first in Charleston, then in Abbeville, thus becoming acquainted with low-country and up-country habits and customs, — the two sections of the State being not a little different in many important respects, as indeed they still are.

Accounts differ as to his success when he first began to practise at Abbeville in 1807. Dr. Von Holst doubts whether he would ever have been a great lawyer; because “he was not objective enough to examine his premises with sufficient care;” but premises in law are not like premises in politics, which very frequently do not admit of examination. I am inclined to think that Calhoun, in his absence of creative imagination, would have been in his proper place at the bar; for

I am forced to qualify Dr. Von Holst's statement that he was a born leader of men, and therefore a born politician. Calhoun led thought rather than men, and lacking imagination, he led thought badly. In the sphere of law, however, he would have been fenced in by precedents in such a way as to keep him from grievously erratic thinking, and his wonderful powers of analysis and of logical deduction would have found full vent; but this, again, is speculation, for which I apologize.

Facts are what we want here; and facts seem to favor Dr. Von Holst, for Calhoun was almost immediately sent to the Legislature, and in 1811 was elected to Congress. A little incident of his legislative service may be recorded for the light it throws on his character. He opposed the candidacies of Madison and George Clinton for the presidency, and thought that South Carolina ought to nominate, as a sort of reconciliation candidate, John Langdon of New Hampshire. Here is the radical defect of Calhoun's character, and of that of his State, standing out in bold relief, — that portentous lack of humor which never fails to lead men and nations into trouble. Calhoun would have been saved many a blunder had he been able to speak disrespectfully of the equator — or of South Carolina.

While a legislator Calhoun had favored war with Great Britain; it was natural, therefore, that

he should throw in his lot with Clay and the war party in Congress. It was equally natural that his strong personality easily carried him to the front in spite of his youth, for the compromising tactics of Jefferson and Madison had so emasculated the people and their representatives that strength of any kind was bound to count.

Calhoun would have made his mark in any Congress, but he made it all the more speedily and conspicuously in the Twelfth. His first set speech was against John Randolph; and his biographers are right in contending that the young representative, who was virtually chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations, acquitted himself admirably. Indeed, most of Calhoun's qualities as an orator are present in this speech; and I cannot see that he ever varied much from his solid, logical, unemotional, and slightly heavy method of presenting his ideas. Later on he grew more prolix and more subtle; but his style of presentation and exposition changed little—a fact which is characteristic of talents rather than of genius. A tendency to sophistry, which was to grow with his growth, is also to be detected in this maiden effort.

I need not dwell on this period of his career; because there is only one feature of it that is at all important to us, and that feature is well known. I refer to his pronounced Union proclivi-

ties and repudiation of the narrow strict constructionist views of the Virginia school. When, later, he became the Cato of the States'-rights party, he was, of course, twitted with his tergiversation, and had some little difficulty in defending himself. His honesty, however, cannot be called into question, nor is the cause of the change far to seek.

Slavery had been steadily looming up as a political issue, and slavery could be maintained in the Union only on principles of the strictest construction. Hence, to be consistent with himself in 1830, Calhoun had to be inconsistent with what he had been in 1815. He showed his unflinching courage by the calm way he changed front, and bore the taunts of his opponents. He did, indeed, sometimes try to make out that the change had not been as great as it really was, but this was only human nature. Certainly the Calhoun of 1811-1817 was as national in his proclivities as one could well have desired. He had no hesitation in using the word "nation," and in meaning it. He favored the protection of manufactures, though he afterwards tried to show that he had been very slightly affected by the delusion. He was far from taking a Jeffersonian position on the subject of the national bank, and he was positively liberal in the matter of internal improvements.

Naturally his political notions are less meta-

physical than they afterwards became, but it is easy to trace the germs of the fetich-worship of the Constitution that was to be his bane. In his speech on the treaty-making power, he said of this instrument, "We ought scarcely to indulge a wish that its provisions should be different from what they are." A pious Mussulman could hardly say more about the Koran, but the Mussulman keeps his Koran in mind; while Calhoun must have forgotten this speech when he allowed John Tyler to play his joint-resolution game with regard to Texas. No one knew better than Calhoun the scope of the treaty-making power, and no one had ever marked out so strictly the limits of the legislative. But, after all, one feels like forgiving him his inconsistency, grievous and almost dishonest as it was, when one reads the noble words in which he took his stand against the pernicious folly that a legislator must implicitly obey the instructions of his constituents. "The Constitution is my letter of instruction,"<sup>1</sup> he proudly said, and he meant it; only later he could not see that some evil spirit had slipped a distorting lens before his eyes.<sup>2</sup>

The young Calhoun, then, was a Union man and

<sup>1</sup> See "Works," II., 179.

<sup>2</sup> For Calhoun's Union sentiments see his "Works," II., p. 139, speech on Repeal of Direct Tax. In the same speech he said, "We are the most growing nation on earth." For his views on protection, see his speeches of April 6, 1816, and Feb. 4, 1817. He



a patriotic one. He claimed that he never ceased to be, and in a certain sense his claim was true. But he gradually assumed the dreadful position of a mother who slowly poisons her child, thinking to save its life; now he was like a mother feeding her first-born. His sincerity and honesty are no less apparent first than last; although it is, perhaps, admissible to think that a desire to oppose the dominant Virginian school may account in part for the rather lavish way in which the representative of a proud and rising, but still unimportant State gave his support to the national idea. Patriotism and love of the Union were, however, peculiarly characteristic of the up-country Carolinians down to the close of Calhoun's life.<sup>1</sup>

tried to justify these views in his speeches on the Force Bill, Feb. 15 and 16, 1833. The following quotations should also be carefully noted.

A. From the speech of Dec. 4, 1812: —

"Our Union cannot safely stand on the cold calculations of interest alone. It is too weak to withstand political convulsions. We cannot, without hazard, neglect that which makes men love to be members of an extensive community — the love of greatness, the consciousness of strength. So long as American is a proud name, we are safe; but the day we are ashamed of it, the Union is more than half destroyed."

B. From the speech of Jan. 17, 1814 (which contains some ineffective rhetoric): —

"For my part, I think that a fair and moderate opposition ought at all times to be respected; but that our Constitution authorized that dangerous and vicious species which I have attempted to describe, I utterly deny. . . . If, then, our opponents have the right [to make that kind of factions opposition], it is because it is not expressly forbidden. In this sense there is no limitation to their constitutional rights."

<sup>1</sup> This fact will be apparent to any one who will make a study of such a newspaper as the *Edgefield Advertiser* between 1835 and 1845, noting especially the accounts given of the Fourth of July banquets.

As Secretary of War in Monroe's administrations, Calhoun seems to have shown marked ability — not enough to save him from criticism, most of it captious, or enough to entitle him to claim the possession of executive powers of the first rank, but sufficient to add materially to his general reputation as a statesman. It is easy to praise his report on roads and canals, and, what is more to the point, to read it, it is also easy to agree with Dr. Von Holst, that his reports on Indian affairs are most creditable to his heart and to his head.

How far his presidential aspirations, which now became great, tended to impair his efficiency as an officer of government or his character as a man it is hard to determine; but I do not think the questions important, in view of the turn affairs soon took. Calhoun may have developed some of the arts of the politician; but he soon dropped them, and depended for his influence upon his integrity and his brain — a fact which makes him almost a unique figure in our history. That he should have had the presidential fever was natural, and honorable to him; but I do not believe that it affected his career seriously, except in so far as his subsequent perceptions of the hopelessness of his ambition tended to strengthen his independence, and to develop his power of leaving personal and transient considerations out of his reasoning upon affairs of state. That he deliberately set to work

to split the Union that he might at least rule over one-half of it, is an old wives' tale.

The two terms as Vice-President that followed his cabinet service are important in Calhoun's political life as marking the turning-point in his career. The split with Jackson, toward the end, left no hope that the main forces of the democracy could be as yet prevailed upon to accept Carolinian leadership, and the tariff of 1828 determined the fact that that leadership would be both fanatical and doctrinaire. Calhoun's leadership would probably have developed these qualities under any circumstances; but it is as well to remark that, if he had won the presidency in 1824 or 1828, he might, like Jefferson, have found it hard to preserve his philosophical consistency, and that, if he had been in the House or Senate, he would have been using weapons instead of forging them.

It was his position as Vice-President, half in and half out of the political arena, that furnished both opportunity and incentive for the development of his metaphysical views on the nature of constitutional government, and for that analysis of the problem presented by slavery which is now his chief claim to a sinister reputation. A strong Vice-President, like a full-blooded Prince of Wales, is likely to get into trouble; for another well-known potentate is famous for finding work of his own for idle hands to do.

Having now reached Calhoun's turning-point, we shall be compelled to pause for a while to consider the political and social environment that produced so great a change in the man's life. Henceforward the man himself and his outward career will hardly concern us. He becomes the embodiment of an idea, which, long rejected, becomes at last the idea of a section, and leads to the greatest civil war of modern times.

Calhoun the Senator, the rival of Webster and Clay, is, of course, interesting as a figure, but as an unearthly figure, wielding in the combat arms as mixed and queer as those that Milton put into the hands of his angels. Calhoun as Secretary of State under Tyler is more a demon helmsman, somehow translated from the "Ancient Mariner" to the Constitutional History of the United States, than the successor of Jefferson and Madison. The Calhoun who in 1850 tottered into the Senate-chamber to hear his political testament read by a colleague is a prophetic Prometheus in a new and strange garb, yet still stretched upon the inevitable rack of pain, the Protagonist, in short, of a drama embodying a phase of the old myth unknown to Æschylus or to Shelley. With this shadowy Calhoun we shall henceforward have little to do, for our time will be fully taken up with endeavoring to thread the equally shadowy mazes of his constitutional theory.

The tariff of 1828, naturally pressing hard on an agricultural State like South Carolina, and no relief having been experienced from legislative resolutions and petitions, the politicians of the State would probably have been at a stand-still had not Calhoun come to their assistance with his famous "Exposition." This document did not so much create public sentiment as focus it. There had been for some years a strong party in South Carolina that had pushed the doctrine of strict construction to extremes under the leadership of Judge William Smith. This gentleman was now shoved aside to make room for Calhoun, such a recruit as the Vice-President being almost equivalent to a victory for the party. The result was the rapid formulation and pressing through of that strange instrument upon federal coercion known as Nullification.

But the nullifiers did not triumph in the State without a hard struggle; for a party with the curious sobriquet of "Union and States'-Rights Party" fought every inch of the way with them, under the leadership of such men as Hugh S. Legaré, Joel R. Poinsett, T. S. Grimké, and J. L. Petigru.<sup>1</sup> The feeling was so intense in Charles-

<sup>1</sup> Professor D. F. Houston has shown clearly in his monograph on nullification in the new Harvard Series of Studies that South Carolina, in the person of some of her impetuous politicians, can be more truly said to have dragged Calhoun into nullification, than the great statesman can be said to have dragged his State

ton that families were divided among themselves, and blows and bloodshed were with difficulty prevented.

The various stages of the crisis are well known, and need not detain us. South Carolina would possibly have fought, and Jackson would certainly have crushed her; but neither side was averse to the compromise which reduced the tariff and passed an empty force bill. Calhoun was right, however, when he claimed the result as a practical victory for his State and for the political doctrine he had so subtly propounded in his address to the people of South Carolina and his letter to Governor Hamilton.<sup>1</sup>

These documents had certainly helped to make the mass of his constituents nullifiers as strenuous as himself and more hot-brained, while the same arguments in his celebrated speech on the Force

into it. Even Calhoun's services as a formulator of the doctrine were not so great as is usually supposed; but the influence of his example was immense, and it is at least open to doubt whether, if he had held aloof, the minor politicians could have carried things with such a high hand. It should be remembered, furthermore, that while Calhoun's well-known papers on the subject were much indebted to local pamphlets like "The Crisis," long since forgotten, much of the reasoning of these latter can be traced back to the writings of the Virginian school, particularly to those of Jefferson and John Taylor of Carolina.

<sup>1</sup> This proposition is often denied; but when a doctrine like that of nullification is met only by an *assertion of force* the victory is with the doctrinaires, a fact which is clearly proved by South Carolina's subsequent actions.

Bill were to make themselves feared and half respected by nearly every thoughtful man in the Union. He posed willingly as their chief exponent, and was willing in addition to be regarded as their author, if Jefferson's friends repudiated the honor for their favorite.

Madison, who was still living, was positive in his assertion that the South Carolina doctrines were far more extreme than any that had been in his mind or Jefferson's in 1798 ; but Madison was old, and had been known to change his opinions in curious ways.

Calhoun was positive that he had discovered no new thing, in spite of John Randolph's declaration that nullification was nonsense, and although his own previous record forced him to admit that for a long time he himself had not understood the true nature of the Constitution. And Calhoun was in the main right. Nullification could be deduced from the Constitution if that instrument were regarded as a compact, and it was no trouble to show that the compact theory had been widely held in 1789. Nullification was the legitimate outcome of the Kentucky Resolutions, if the latter were subjected to the analysis of a searching mind, not afraid of its own conclusions, and, indeed, certain of those conclusions from the start. All Calhoun had to do was to press the commercial metaphor a bit, and his point was gained. If the States were

partners to a compact, and were sovereign except in so far as they had delegated part of their powers to the general government, the latter might well be regarded as the agent of the States, whose actions might be subject to disavowal by any of the principals.<sup>1</sup>

Secession would be a dissolution of partnership; nullification would be the disavowal of the act of an agent. But the disavowal of an agent's acts need not at all mean that the principal must cease to employ the agent; on the contrary, the latter, having got his cue, would act accordingly, and be a better agent than he was before. Therefore nullification, far from being destructive of the Union, would be conservative of it; in fact, nullification was now the only peaceable way to insure the stability of the general government.<sup>2</sup>

Ludicrous as it may seem, this is Calhoun's doctrine of nullification stripped of its expository

<sup>1</sup> See the letter to Governor Hamilton.

<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that Calhoun did not claim the right of a State to set aside a law of the general government, except in the manner described in the following extract from the letter to Governor Hamilton:—

“I do not claim for a State the right to abrogate an act of the general government. It is the Constitution that annuls an unconstitutional act. Such an act is of itself void and of no effect. What I claim is, the right of the State *as far as its citizens are concerned* to declare the *extent of the obligation*, and that *such declaration is binding on them.*”

He asserts that “there is no immediate connection between the citizens of a State and the general government,”—one of the queerest perversions of fact for the sake of theory that is known to history.



features. This is the doctrine of peaceable resistance to Northern encroachments upon Southern rights, which he preached from 1828 until his death. His opponents might laugh at it, his disciples might rush past it and clamor for secession out and out, the mass of simple-minded people might be perplexed by it; but he continued to expound it calmly and logically and consistently, just because he was not what admirers have always thought him — a political philosopher of the first order.

A philosopher examines his premises as well as his deductions and conclusions. Calhoun unconsciously started with the conclusions he wanted, reasoned back to his premises, and would not, because he could not, examine them. In other words, he had come slowly to see that the preponderance of political power had shifted to the North and must stay there. This meant, he could not doubt, national consolidation, and national consolidation meant the overthrow of slavery. The retention of slavery in the Union, being what he desired, was the conclusion to be reached; this could be deduced only from something just the reverse of national consolidation.

The problem, therefore, was how to arrest this consolidation. An instrument for the latter purpose had been already forged for him — strict construction of the Constitution. Slavery was rec-

ognized by the Constitution — construe that instrument strictly, and you would find it impossible to legislate slavery out of the Union. But experience had shown that with a Supreme Court,<sup>1</sup> executive, and Congress grasping at power, and a people supine or conniving, loose construction of the Constitution and consequent national consolidation must be expected. Where, then, must resistance to this tendency be looked for? Plainly in the States affected by it, who, being partners in the Union, have the rights of partners — protest, and disavowal or withdrawal.

Where, now, is the weak spot in this reasoning? There is none in the reasoning itself; and in all Calhoun's voluminous speeches and writings you will find little to fault in the reasoning proper. You will occasionally smile at some proof of historical ignorance, or some instance of a portentous lack of humor; but with Calhoun as a dialectician one is tempted to marvel and admire, not to smile.

Grant him but his premises, and he leads you willy-willy to his conclusions. From these you start back with horror and amazement. What could the man have been thinking of? you exclaim; this is not government, it is anarchy; this would mean stagnation, the relapsing into barbar-

<sup>1</sup> John Taylor of Carolina had previously analyzed very subtly the part played and to be played by the court in the drama of consolidation.

ism. True enough for you in 1896, but not true for Calhoun or the average Southerner in 1836. They regarded slavery as a positive blessing, and wished to keep it. They did not want progress, and had no fear of anarchy within the borders of their own section.<sup>1</sup> They were not horrified, therefore, at their conclusions; their reasoning was sound, and they would have been more than human if they had strictly examined the premises which afforded such agreeable conclusions.

Besides, was it entirely their fault that their premises were unsound? Had they not with the rest of the country conspired to make a fetich out of the Constitution; <sup>2</sup> and was that instrument, as it came from the hands of the founders, a perfectly satisfactory piece of work? Had not the very ingenuity of its construction offered a premium to ingenious interpretation? Had not its framers flattered themselves with having given the world a new kind of government, in which that mysterious entity, sovereignty, had been nicely parcelled out?

Finally, had not the Constitution been a compromise, and therefore, like all compromises, satisfactory to no one, and always provocative of tinkering? If Calhoun started out with the false

<sup>1</sup> "It is not we, but the Union which is in danger," said Calhoun in his speech of March 9, 1836, with regard to abolitionist petitions.

<sup>2</sup> "That sacred instrument, the Constitution." Speech on the Power of Removal, February, 1835.

premises involved in the idea that a government could be formed on the same principles as a partnership, he made no more serious blunder than the founders did when they introduced their fatal distinction between delegated and reserved powers. If Calhoun had no true conception of the indivisible nature of sovereignty, he was in no worse and no better predicament than many members of the Convention of 1787. If he was satisfied with the conclusions he reached, — nullification and the retention of slavery in the Union, — so were they with their conclusions, — a compromise Constitution and an embryo Union.

No, I for one find it impossible to blame Calhoun greatly for the fact that he did not examine his premises sufficiently; but that fact necessarily prevents me from considering him a thoroughly great and philosophic statesman. The founders of the Union were not as philosophic, either, as is sometimes imagined; but they, at least, made it possible that a Union should be formed that would in time develop into a nation, and for this they deserve not merely the name of statesmen, but the affectionate and reverent regard of all who live under the government which they inaugurated.

But if we do not blame Calhoun for his premises, what are we to say of his conclusions, which really did much to determine those premises? As to the conclusion that nullification, or a separate

State veto, was a practicable or constitutional expedient for doing away with undesirable federal laws, there can be no use at this late day of saying anything; the notion is worthy neither of refutation nor of scorn. Indeed, very few of the proslavery leaders after 1835 paid any attention to nullification *per se*. They admitted that it would be absurd to remain in the Union and not obey its laws, they would not remain in the Union if slavery were interfered with, therefore they abjured nullification and preached secession.

Calhoun could not restrain his own disciples; for they did not love the Union as he did, and while they regarded him as a fanatic on the subject of nullification, he was consistently holding to that palpable absurdity because it was the only means to preserve both the Union and slavery. If he saw no absurdity in his purpose, he was not likely to see absurdity in his means.

But why did he not see that his purpose to preserve the Union and slavery was absurd? He did probably see that, as matters stood and had been going, it was absurd; and yet he hoped against hope that matters might be changed. Even in his last speech it seemed a perfectly simple proposition to him that the North should change its ways of looking at things, go back to the good old views of the Constitution, and leave the South in the possession of her rights.

But how could a sensible man, a man who had been keen enough to see the irreconcilable antagonism between progressive democracy and slavery long before the mass of his fellow-citizens saw it, indulge even for a moment in the hope that the North would recede from her position, and leave the South to enjoy her peculiar institution unmolested? I doubt if, in his heart of hearts, he had any hope for the South when he made his pathetic last speech. If he had, it was a very slight one; but, like the old Roman that he was, he would keep the fight up, that it might be said of him, as of his prototype, Cato the Younger: —

*“Victrix causa deis placuit, sed victa Catoni.”*

It did seem a simple proposition that the North should respect Southern rights, but he knew or felt sure that his section would be continually worsted. He died asking what would become of the “poor South.” And yet, marvellous as it seems, it did not occur to him that there could possibly be an error in his fundamental doctrine that slavery was necessary to the South and must be maintained at all costs; he never once faltered in his belief that slavery was a blessing; he never once doubted that the cause which was continually growing weaker and becoming more obnoxious to the rest of the world, was a cause worthy of the

loyal devotion of men, and of the benevolent and protecting smile of God.

Strange irony of fate, that the subtlest dialectician this country has produced should have been utterly unable to analyze correctly a social and economic problem that had been probed by Washington and Jefferson half a century before. If Calhoun had said, "We do not know how to get rid of slavery, but we will manage our own problem ourselves," his position would have been more intelligible. But when he boldly cried out, "Slavery is a blessing which you of the North should never have abandoned, and of which the Territories must not be deprived,"<sup>1</sup> he took a stand that seemed little short of madness.

And yet it was a position that is now perfectly intelligible to the calm student of our history. The South, owing largely to slavery, was the most conservative portion of the Union; it was also that portion in which feudal notions had been most deeply rooted, and had most thoroughly survived. On feudality and slavery had been erected an aristocracy which had naturally developed the chief traits of this form of government, — bravery, pride, and conservatism.

In the ferment of the Revolutionary period a few leaders — great statesmen like Washington and great philosophers like Jefferson — had been

<sup>1</sup> These are not Calhoun's actual words.

led to scrutinize the society on which they proposed to found their new governments, State and national, and had perceived that the slave-basis of this society in the Southern group of States was rotten to the core. Neither Washington nor Jefferson saw clearly what could be done to remedy the evil, but both hoped that the master class might be brought to see the danger that confronted them.

Jefferson, moreover, had unbounded faith in his panacea, democracy. But before he died he foresaw that great perils were threatening his State and section ; and he must have felt a doubt whether the new generation had come up to his expectation, and drunk in the principles of liberty as their mothers' milk. For the new generation was plainly inferior to that of which Madison was almost the last survivor. William Wirt noticed the change, and commented on it in some of his Addisonian essays ; and in spite of the presence of Madison, Monroe and Marshall, the Virginia Convention of 1829-1830, which argued the question of emancipation, would have proved to a candid spectator that the glory was departing from Virginia.

At such a moment it was natural for new aspirants for power to step to the front ; it was South Carolina's opportunity, and she seized it. But south of Virginia there had practically never been any anti-slavery sentiment ; and when Virginia dropped the reins of power, there was no issue on



which Southern leadership could be more securely based than on the slavery question. But how could slavery be made an issue if its defenders were to be always apologizing for it? Could politicians, who were fiery and arrogant by nature, be expected to endeavor to gain power by appealing to their opponents' sympathies? Besides, a party had arisen in the North — small, it is true, but making itself heard — that proclaimed slavery to be a cursed institution. Could fiery aristocrats stand that? Had not their fathers and their fathers' fathers owned slaves; how could it then be wrong? And now that the cotton-gin had been invented, and the world was beginning to bow down to cotton as king, how could a system that furnished the only labor suited to Southern climatic conditions be shown to be unprofitable?

Yes, slavery was right and profitable; and on it had been built a civilization which for charm of manners, for social virtues, for masterful political energies, had had no superior in the world's history. It was true that abolitionists bandied terms of reproach like "slave-driver," collected rare instances of inhuman treatment of slaves, and pointed to certain features of slave-codes that seemed barbarous to outsiders.

But the Southern gentleman knew that he and his neighbors were not cruel tyrants, and he claimed that outsiders could not judge what laws

were necessary to keep a servile race in proper subjection. Slavery was his own concern; it was a matter of municipal law; it was guaranteed by the Constitution; it stood on a thoroughly moral and legal basis. Should the democracy of the North be allowed to assail an institution so vital to the aristocracy of the South?

No — his conservative instincts, his ancestral pride, his masterful courage, forbade him to allow this for an instant. If Washington and Jefferson opposed slavery, it must have been because they really had not understood the institution.<sup>1</sup> If Northerners criticized it, was it not because they were jealous of the South's political and social prestige? If foreigners denounced it, was it not part and parcel of the new-fangled and monstrous atheistical and revolutionary spirit of change that had been unloosed by the French Revolution?

So the old-time Southern planter argued, as he sat with his neighbors on his broad veranda, and smoked his after-dinner cigar. A disunionist and a traitor he never was — he could not have been; for all his instincts were loyal and conservative, and he was not given to great displays of energy. All he wanted was to be let alone; but if he were not let alone, he would peaceably withdraw from a partnership made for him by his ancestors when

<sup>1</sup> A. H. Stephens proclaimed this later on, and it was a favorite idea with the essayists who wrote for *DeBow's Review*.

times were better than now; if any one tried to stop him, he would fight.

Meanwhile, he hoped things would not come to this pass, especially as that able "up-countryman," John C. Calhoun, had taken up the constitutional cudgels, and trounced that Yankee Webster (who was, after all, a clever chap) in a way that would not be soon forgotten. So the old Southern planter argued, if we can apply such a term to his leisurely manner of arriving at conclusions. He let his politicians and editors argue for him, while he sat by and applauded.

And before the final struggle came the politicians and editors had persuaded him that slavery was more the occasion than the cause of all the trouble, that really it was nothing more nor less than a matter of constant violations of the Constitution on the part of the North; and that, if a war should come, which was hardly likely, as shopkeepers would not fight, he would arm himself, and go to the field as the champion of local self-government and of vested and inalienable constitutional rights.

He went to the field, and fought heroically in this belief; and this belief he holds to-day, while recognizing that the old order has passed away forever. Slavery hardly enters his mind now; but when he does think of it he generally admits it to have been an evil, and is glad that it is

over and done with. He is still, however, a strict constructionist.

Now, in all this nightmarish reasoning, what is there that is blameworthy or unnatural when due allowance is made for hereditary bias and for environment? Where is the ground for accusations of treachery and treason? If any one can cry "treachery and treason," it is the Southern planter himself, when he realizes, as he does not often do, how the political leaders he trusted lured him onward like so many will-o'-the-wisps into pitfall after pitfall. They were the men who should have studied the economic condition of the South, and seen how far it was falling behind the North on account of slavery. They should have told him that it was slavery that kept his roads bad, that gave him wretched "Oldfield" schools, that prevented his cities from growing, that kept immigrants from his public lands, that, in short, stamped its evil mark on everything he wrote or said or did. They should have kept abreast of the thought of the world, analyzed the relation of master and slave, told him that it rested solely on the doctrine that might makes right, and assured him that this doctrine was abhorrent to civilization and progress.

Instead of this, what did they tell him? They told him that slavery was morally justifiable; and his priests, his bishops, his university professors of

moral philosophy, confirmed the falsehood. They told him that slavery was economically and socially a blessing. They told him that the nation which Washington had founded and called a nation was in reality only a league of States, from which it would soon be proper to withdraw. They told him, finally, that he was the happiest, the richest, the bravest, the most intelligent man alive, that the rest of the world envied and hated him, and that all he needed for perfect felicity here below was to shut himself up in his manor-house, proclaim cotton king, and leave the mad world to its wicked ways.<sup>1</sup>

This was what they told him ; and loyal gentleman as he was (for were they not his chosen representatives, and could he distrust them, since they were Southern gentlemen too?), he believed them, and acted on their advice. Certainly, if any one has the right to point the finger and cry "traitor," it is the cajoled and betrayed Southern gentleman of the old *régime* ; and next to him it is the non-slaveholding whites of the South, who were led to support a war whose successful issue could have resulted only in a perpetuation of their pariah-like state. But, after all, were the Southern politicians traitors ?

<sup>1</sup> That I have exaggerated or interpolated anything of my own into the above sentences will be affirmed only by that large class of sentimentalists who talk and write about the *ante bellum* South, without taking the trouble to study its history.

Whether a certain set of them were traitors in the winter of 1860–1861 is a question that will occupy us in the next lecture. Whether Calhoun and those who thought and acted with him were traitors to the Union and to the people they represented is a question only to those who have not thoroughly understood the anomalous situation in which the country stood from the time of the Missouri Compromise to the outbreak of the Civil War.

There was no question as to the legal fact that slavery was acknowledged by the Constitution; there should have been no question as to the moral fact that slavery was not acknowledged as legitimate by the conscience of the recently awakened world.

But the North, recognizing the constitutional obligation to protect slavery, was conscious also of the moral obligation to suppress it, and, halting between opinions, proclaimed the doctrine of “a higher law.” The Southerner was in no such dilemma: he knew that slavery was legal, he could not see that it was immoral; hence he became righteously indignant at what he was bound to regard as Northern aggression, and infractions of the Constitution.

But righteous indignation generally leads to extremes; and righteous indignation over the fortunes of an unrighteous institution was certain to

do it. The more fiercely the abolitionist leaders inveighed against slavery, the more vehemently the pro-slavery advocates asserted their own virtue and the baseness of their enemies. The Northerner began to think all Southerners slave-drivers; the Southerner began to think all Northerners either fanatics or cowardly shop-keepers.

There was not enough travel between the two sections to introduce any real knowledge of either; for the Southerners who went to Northern watering-places were too often vulgar upstarts, who had no social position at home, and whose loud and boisterous behavior entirely misrepresented the better elements of the section. Thus it was that the Northerner began to judge the South through the spectacles of the abolitionist or the politician, while the Southerner judged the North largely through what his politicians told him.

These latter were sincere enough in their way. They believed the North to be engaged in a cowardly war on the South by means of protective tariffs, Wilmot provisos, *et cetera*; and they retaliated by nullification, commercial conventions, Mexican wars, encroachments on the Territories, Dred Scott decisions, *et cetera*. They believed that the North would talk but not fight; so they indulged in tall talk themselves about drinking all the blood that would be spilt in case the South broke the Union. They indulged in something

worse than talk when they resorted to fisticuffs, and fired on the national flag; and they were terribly repaid.

Yet, through it all, they were honest to their constituents and to themselves. Their every action was natural under the circumstances, for were they not unwittingly trying to make wrong right; and has not this attempt, since the beginning of the world, led to evil actions, evil words, evil thoughts without number?

Instead of blaming these men, let us pity them. Let us remember that history teaches us that all abuses die hard, that the worst and most foolish causes have often the most honest and brave defenders. I would no more blame an old-time Southerner for following Calhoun or Jefferson Davis, than I would blame a loyal Highlander for following Prince Charlie. And the leaders themselves, though they wrought woe to their followers, were impelled by destiny as much as by personal ambition; and I, for one, find it difficult to judge them. Of their actions I can speak plainly enough; but of their motives I can say only that the more I study their conduct, the more honest I consider their self-delusion to have been. I will not call them wise statesmen, but I am not going to insult the humanity I have in common with them by calling them traitors and knaves.

Yes; John Caldwell Calhoun, in the seventeen



years that elapsed between his debate with Webster on the Force Bill and his death, wrought his country and his section infinite woe, but he did it blindly; he did it, intending all the while to effect only peace and reconciliation. He failed; but so did Webster and Clay fail, and so will any man fail who does not distinguish right from wrong.

Yet it would have needed a statesman with the genius and character of Washington to have seen clearly the South's duty in 1830, and forced her into the right path. She had no such statesman, and slavery accounted for the fact. The section that had led the Union for fifty years, that had developed a dashing type of statesmanship, which, with many faults, had many virtues, that had done much to inculcate and spread democracy through the land, had fallen into the hands of a doctrinaire fanatic, and was soon to pass into worse hands than his. For Calhoun, though utterly and terribly wrong in all that he said and wrote and did for slavery, was nevertheless a dignified and noble figure, whether in the Cabinet or the Senate. Dignity and nobility were far from characterizing most of his successors.

You will hardly expect me, in the brief time that remains to me, to comment with any fulness upon the successive stages of Calhoun's career after he took his stand as the Arch-Nullifier.

Those stages are practically the stages of our national history between 1833 and 1850, and they are also stages of the slavery agitation. As each new phase would arise, Calhoun would deliver one of his incisive logical promulgations of States'-rights philosophy, and would utter his prophetic warnings of the doom that awaited North and South alike if the question of slavery were agitated.

He fought manfully and with the courage of despair — of despair that grew greater with the years. On topics unconnected with slavery he was still the weighty, massive Calhoun of earlier days. He fought the spoils system with a noble earnestness that deserves lasting remembrance, even though he did not foresee that Congress would in this matter prove more dangerous and rapacious than the President. With Jackson before his eyes, he naturally feared the executive. But spoils system and sub-treasury were mere asides. Strenuous debate on the acceptance of abolitionist petitions, queer political metaphysics on the subject of the admission of new States, violent protests against England's importing her emancipation notions into the law of nations, are much more characteristic of the Senator who owned South Carolina like a pocket borough.

That the presidential fever should again have taken hold of him is curious, but so it did; and

he resigned the Senate in 1842, to be immediately nominated for the great office by his loyal State. South Carolina would stand by her greatest son, whether in defeat or in victory; for he had stood by her, and she was nothing if not loyal. Whether she would have stood by him had he not stood by her "peculiar institution" is another matter, which we need not discuss; since Calhoun was not the man to avow opinions he did not really hold, merely in order to obtain power.

But there was no chance for so able a man in the Democratic ranks; so he abandoned his candidacy, and seemed about to have a chance to rest after a hard-fought life, when Tyler summoned him to the portfolio of state and the invidious task of bringing Texas into the Union. Believing slavery to be a blessing, and believing, furthermore, that the permanence of this blessing depended upon its ever wider diffusion in point of territory, fearing, too, that an independent free State bordering on the extreme South would work damage to his favorite institution, he accepted his appointment, and went about his job — for that it was a political job, though not such in his eyes, no serious student of the times can safely deny.

The methods he and Tyler used to accomplish their purpose deserve all the harsh criticism they have received; but I myself prefer for obvious reasons, in view of much that I have said to-night,

to exculpate the men. Calhoun in his sober mind would have repudiated the joint-resolution scheme, but Calhoun the fanatic forgot all his constitutional lore on the subject of the treaty-making power. Calhoun the reserved and courteous gentleman would never have lugged in the slavery controversy in his letters to Pakenham, the British minister; but Calhoun the rampant theorist and controversialist regretted that he could not get another chance at him.

Still, it must be remembered to his credit, that, while he would scruple at little in order to secure Texas for slavery, he would be no party to Polk's schemes for forcing Mexico into a war in order to rob her of more territory. He seems to have been sincere in his claim that he would have secured Texas without bloodshed; but he did not have the wisdom to foresee that he was playing a rash game, at which bolder and more unscrupulous gamblers would soon raise the stakes, and compel him to lay down his hand.

The dream that Polk would retain him as Secretary of State, that he might finish the negotiations he had begun, soon vanished; and he had to content himself with unheeded prophecies of the evil results that must follow the uncontrolled rashness of his own disciples. He was back in the Senate now, Judge Hager having resigned on purpose to restore him his rightful seat; and he could offer

resolutions annulling the Missouri Compromise, and devoting to slavery soil that even a government like that of Mexico had devoted to freedom. He could take this step regardless of inconsistency with his past utterances, because he said that only on this high ground of absolute equality could slavery keep up the struggle with freedom.

Here, again, he proved a leader, and the next decade worked out to their logical and bitter results the principles he laid down. But he was not destined to see the curtain roll up on the last act of the drama of which he himself had been protagonist.

California with its free Constitution threw itself in the way of his theories; the crisis of 1850 came, and with it Clay's inevitable compromises; he made his last great speech, in which he described his State-veto panacea once more; and at last, on the 31st of March, 1850, his weary and perturbed spirit was at rest.

He had known that his end was near, and, as a dying bequest to the Union that he loved, had spent a few months that other men would have devoted to rest, in composing his "Disquisition on Government," and his "Discourse on the Constitution and Government of the United States."

Of these two treatises it will be sufficient to say, that they are in many respects the most remarkable political documents the student of American

history is called upon to read. He must read them if he wishes to get a full and well-rounded view of Calhoun's constitutional theories, although it is at once plain that all their important points are covered in the better known speeches.

It is to the "Disquisition" that we must go for the famous praise of the Constitution of Poland, as well as for the fullest explanation of the doctrine of the concurrent majority. The reader must, however, be warned that it is not safe to approach these books unless he has thoroughly disabused his mind of the notion that sovereignty can really be divided and a government founded on compact. If one start with these notions in one's head, the sure grip of Calhoun's logic will end by making one a nullifier or a lunatic, it matters little which.

One must also have one's general knowledge of history in a shape to use; and one must also be careful to remember that not a little of Calhoun's munitions of war had been manufactured and stored away for him by Jefferson, Madison, and John Taylor of Carolina — more especially by the last named, who was in a negative way almost as acute a critic of the Constitution as Calhoun himself. Yet when all is said, Calhoun's masterly analysis of the rights of minorities, and of the best methods of securing them fairly, entitles him to rank as our most original political theorist.

And now, in conclusion, how shall we sum up

this man's life and work? The task seems almost hopeless, so beset is it with contradictions. A devoted patriot spends the best portion of his life struggling against the manifest destiny of his country. A profoundly analytical mind fails utterly to grasp the true nature of an institution he has known and studied for nearly a lifetime, in spite of the fact that the wisest of his own fore-runners had carefully explained it to him. A practical, level-headed politician and man of affairs turns into a doctrinaire fanatic with a metaphysical theory of politics which would not strike us as out of place if we found it expounded in "Gulliver's Travels." A loyal, true-hearted gentleman brings himself to write quibbling and almost impertinent letters to the minister of a great power, and lends himself to a sly trick to get around a Constitution he has spent his life in defending from insidious attack. What are we to say of such a man?

I, at least, cannot call him a thoroughly wise and great statesman; but I can admire his strong, subtle intellect, and lofty integrity, and soundness of heart. Mistaken he was often, but he never did anything consciously that he thought was wrong or low. His purposes were too high, whatever the means he used to effect them, for us to be able to do without his example of manly independence. And yet we cannot love him, either for

the noble or for the pathetic features of his career. He stands too much apart from his fellows, and the words he speaks are those of prophetic warning rather than those of encouragement or allure-ment. It is not Cassandra that attracts us in "the tale of Troy divine;" it is winsome Helen, in spite of the fact that she

"Launched a thousand ships  
And burnt the topless towers of Ilion."





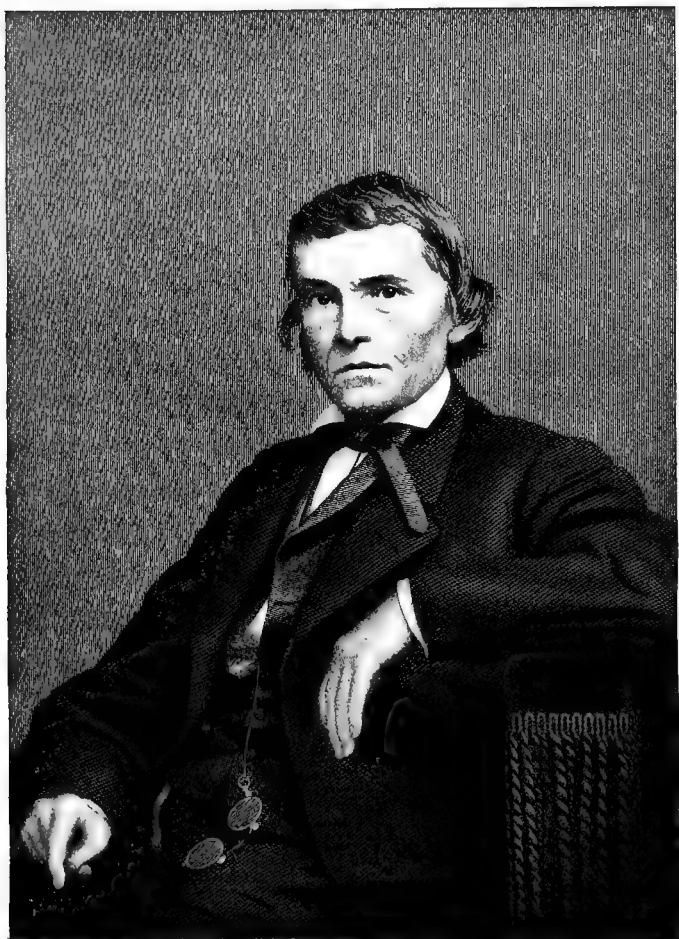
ALEXANDER H. STEPHENS

AND

ROBERT TOOMBS.







ALEXANDER H. STEPHENS.

# ALEXANDER H. STEPHENS

AND

## ROBERT TOOMBS.<sup>1</sup>

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THE two distinguished Georgians whose names are here coupled were in many respects as different as men are usually allowed to be ; but the period of their political activity was the same, their views on most questions of public policy were identical, and their friendship was remarkably strong and pure ; there is therefore no impropriety in treating them together — indeed, a critic of any sympathy would feel some hesitation in treating them apart.

Of the two, Mr. Stephens is the more widely known, and is entitled to the more permanent fame ; but in many ways the career of Toombs is perhaps the more worthy of study, because his

<sup>1</sup> I have relied on Johnston and Browne's full and eulogistic biography of Mr. Stephens and on Stovall's "Life of Toombs," as well as on the chief speeches of both statesmen, and the works of Mr. Stephens. Other sources, such as Miller's "Bench and Bar of Georgia," and the biography of Linton Stephens, have also been used.

character is more typically Georgian and Southern, at least from the point of view of politics.

Now, I must confess that I find it hard to say exactly what the typical Georgian character is. I have read various histories and biographies treating of the State and her people, as well as character sketches by writers of reputation; I have made friends, too, with many citizens of the commonwealth, and think I can tell a Georgian when I see one. Yet, when it comes to describing what a Georgian really is, I am puzzled, and feel disposed to apologize for undertaking the task; yet I protest at the same time that I have a good deal of sympathy and admiration for Georgians, whether in the concrete or the abstract. I have put my head in the noose, however, by venturing to compare Stephens and Toombs as Georgians; and I must try to explain what I mean, even at the risk of having the noose tighten at every sentence.

The Georgian has been called the Southern Yankee, and there is not a little truth in the description. He has much of the native shrewdness and push that mark the genuine Down-Easter, and he has a considerable share of that worthy's moral earnestness. In addition to this he has a good deal of the Virginian's geniality and love of comfort, of the North Carolinian's unpretending democracy, and of the South Carolinian's tendency to exhibitions of fiery temper. But, over

and above everything else, he has an honest and hearty and not unfounded pride in Georgia, and a sort of Masonic affiliation with every person, animal, institution, custom, — in short, *thing*, — that can be called Georgian.

He may not always stand for culture; but he does always stand for patriotism, State and national. He loves success, strength, straight-forwardness, and the solid virtues generally, neither is he averse to the showy ones; but above all he loves virtue in action. Though possessed of a strong, clear intellect, he is more particularly a man of fine senses, of which he makes as good use as he can. He may not always taste the sweetness or see the light of the highest civilization, but he has a good healthy appetite for life. In fine, the Georgian is the Southerner who comes nearest of all the inhabitants of his section to being a normal American.

There are, of course, varieties of Georgians, and different phases of civilization are represented in different sections of the State; but the features of character that make for uniformity are more numerous than those that make for divergence. The various elements that compose the population — original settlers, incomers from Virginia and the two Carolinas — seem to have been fused, save, perhaps, on the coast about Savannah, rather than to have preserved their individuality; and the re-



sult is the typical Georgian, energetic, shrewd, thrifty, brave, religious, patriotic, tending, on the extremes of society, to become narrow and hard, or self-assertive and pushing.

All these enumerated qualities are seen in both the men to whom this lecture is devoted; but Toombs had more energy and self-assertiveness than Stephens, and so represents the dominant class of Georgians, better, perhaps, than the latter. Stephens, however, had more of the shrewdness and sound conservative sense of the Georgia masses than Toombs, which somewhat accounts for the remarkable hold he kept upon the people, even when opposing popular measures like secession. But the man of action is more typically Southern than the man of reflection, and dash will, in a crisis, carry the day over shrewdness; hence when, in the winter of 1861, Georgia had to make her great choice, she followed Toombs rather than Stephens.

But, although Georgia disregarded Stephens's warnings, she was proud to see him made Vice-President of the new Confederacy; and Toombs, who had been slightly alienated from his bosom friend, gladly urged him for the place. They stood by one another, these two Georgians; and this loyalty of Georgians to Georgians has always been characteristic of the people, though they have had fierce enough political factions.

It is amusing, and at the same time pathetic, to see this loyalty stand out conspicuously on every page that one Georgian writes about another. The superlatives scattered through such books as Miller's "Bench and Bar of Georgia," or Stovall's "Life of Toombs," would suffice for at least one thousand schoolboy orations. This exaggeration of a compatriot's good qualities is, at least, a generous failing on the part of a biographer; but it either confuses or disgusts the critical student, and renders the task of obtaining a true insight into the character of these old-time Georgians doubly difficult. Fortunately some biographers, like Messrs. Johnston and Browne in their "Life of Stephens," give enough in the way of letters and extracts from journals to enable one to form a fair opinion of the mental and moral calibre of their subject, as well as of the people to whom that subject appeared to be a great and shining light.

Judging from these and other data, we may arrive at the conclusion that the good people of Georgia have not been without excuse for the love and praise they have lavished on their politicians from early days, — on the fiery and obstreperous Troup, on Judge Clayton, on William H. Crawford, on J. M. Berrien, on Stephens and Toombs. All these men stood for something that meant much to the hardy inhabitants of a compar-

atively new State; they stood for honest and energetic, if not always clear-sighted, patriotism.

That these Georgian idols would not have stood so high, with the exception of Stephens, away from home, is no discredit to the State; for, although one of the original Thirteen Colonies, she was really, in a large part of her territory, not far in advance of Tennessee in point of settlement and development. The gold-fever, the Indian troubles, the large number of non- and small slave-holders gave to the State a tone that separated it widely from such settled and orderly commonwealths as Virginia and South Carolina.

Hence the men that controlled public affairs differed from the older type of statesmen I have hitherto described, in possessing less culture but more energy and dominating influence. Just so their constituents were less cultivated and critical, and more enthusiastic, than the constituents of R. M. T. Hunter or William C. Preston. The same thing is true of the more recently settled States of Alabama and Mississippi. When one reads or hears of the great political campaigns, of the great forensic displays of eloquence, that used to stir up and carry away the voters and jurors in the Southern tier of States in the period from 1830 to 1860, one is tempted either to cavil and become a doubting Thomas, or else to regret that the change of customs, the spread of newspapers,

the opening up of the country, have introduced a spirit of criticism and of self-consciousness that has made politicians and orators and lawyers both seem and actually become less great.

A real Toombs or Yancey or Prentiss would probably no longer sweep a crowd into such ecstasy as of yore, or at least the crowd would not express its delight so uncritically and unreservedly; but in point of fact there is no longer a Toombs, a Yancey, or a Prentiss to make the experiment.

Meanwhile, there is nothing for a modern student to do with these giants of the past but to study carefully their literary remains and the traditions that have come down concerning them, whether orally, or in the stately, high-flown biographies that have been written about them, and endeavor, as best he may, to determine what manner of men they really were, bearing in mind always the danger he runs, as a critical and somewhat unemotional modern, of underestimating their real greatness of vigor and originality.

Robert (Augustus) Toombs and Alexander (Hamilton<sup>1</sup>) Stephens were born not far from one another, in the northeastern part of Georgia, in Wilkes and in Taliaferro Counties respectively;

<sup>1</sup> Toombs practically dropped his middle name; while Stephens added his when a youth, in order to honor a gentleman who had helped him to go to college, Mr. Alexander Hamilton Webster.

and the dates of their births, 1810 and 1812, separate them as little. The circumstances of the two lads were very different, however; for young Toombs was not obliged to labor with his own hands for his support, as was the case with Stephens. He seems to have led the ordinary life of a well-to-do Southern boy, — to have ridden and hunted, and taken a little schooling in the interim. Stephens, on the other hand, deprived of father, mother, and step-mother early in life, learned lessons of privation and endurance while painfully working out the problem of how to develop the talents he felt himself to possess.

When, later on, the two young men entered the University of the State at Athens, Stephens went through his course with great distinction; while Toombs evidently wasted his time, and left because he would probably have been expelled for getting into a scrape connected with playing cards.

The ancestors of both seem to have come from Ireland, and to have been present with the Virginian troops at Braddock's defeat; but in Georgia fortune had evidently smiled on the Toombses, and frowned on the Stephenses. Under her frown the latter family seem to have preserved more of the distinctively Scotch-Irish characteristics of seriousness and plainness of living than the former. Stephens's father was a godly schoolmaster, from

whom his son evidently inherited a clear, logical intellect, combined with a melancholy, not to say moody, temperament. Toombs, on the other hand, had a vigorous but hardly subtle intellect and the highest of animal spirits.

This contrast of natures was accentuated by the physical differences between the two youths. Toombs was large and full-blooded, scarcely knowing what illness meant, in short, what his admirers were pleased to call "a leonine man." Stephens, on the other hand, was so puny that throughout his career he was constantly taken for a boy, and so delicate that his life was continually despaired of. Alexander Pope himself seems to have been only a little more fragile and suffering than Alexander Stephens. But Pope was rich, and won his fame by writing verses in his study or his grotto; Stephens was poor, and fought his way to distinction by arguing before juries in a crowded courthouse, before excited voters and rival candidates on the hustings, and amid jarring factions in Congress during the two most tumultuous decades of our political history. For sheer pluck, and conscientious, successful use of native faculty, the world's history presents us with few characters more worthy of our regard than Alexander H. Stephens. In this connection Toombs cannot be named in the same breath with him.

It would be interesting to recount here in some

detail leading incidents in the early lives of the two men, especially with regard to Stephens; but I must content myself with observing that the careful student may trace in the youthful experiences of both, much that went to make up the matured characters of the men. Impulse is the ruling motive of young Toombs; reflection and a somewhat morbid conscientiousness characterize young Stephens. The latter was picked out by some of his friends for the ministry, and he seriously considered the calling; but his fondness for debate and for historical studies, and perhaps the desire to succeed, in spite of his diminutive size, in a profession which required many of the qualities of a soldier, led him to choose the law in preference to the gospel, although the latter calling might have brought his soldierly qualities into play.

He paid back, however, the money advanced for his education; and it may be added here, that he followed the good example that had been set him, and before his death paid the expenses of at least fifty-two young men who were desirous of getting an education. He might easily have done less good and still have been a conscientious clergyman.

After graduating, young Stephens taught for a few months in a school, then in a private family, then went to Crawfordville, near which he was born, and began the study of law. He had a hard

time of it, but somewhat consoled himself by entering with zest upon the discussion of current political issues, especially Jackson's quarrel with the bank, in which matter, as might be expected, he sided with the President. For the Force Bill, however, he had no manner of use; and in a speech delivered on the Fourth of July, 1834, he discoursed upon it in a way that showed that, whether he was destined to become a Whig or not, the basis of his political reasoning would always be Jeffersonian and democratic in character. This fact should be remembered when we find him later on passing into the Democratic ranks.

We may remember also, that it was while he was a teacher that his tendency to morbid self-analysis received an impetus through the development of a passion which he dared not speak out on account of his poverty and ill-health. Later in life he went through a similar ordeal; and his enforced loneliness must have had some effect upon his mind, tending, as it did, to make his fine analytic powers find a congenial vent in splitting hairs, and to increase his cautious conservatism, so unusual a characteristic in a Georgian politician. His loneliness serves, too, to set him as a figure beside John Randolph himself, and to heighten the contrast with his friend Toombs, who was married shortly after his admission to the bar in 1830, and lived a life of happy domesticity.



Stephens was admitted to practise in the Northern Circuit, of which William H. Crawford was judge, in July, 1834, after three months' study, the examination seeming to have been more severe than it was in the neighboring State of Alabama at this time, where, if we may trust Judge Baldwin,<sup>1</sup> it was highly unusual, if not improper, for a judge to insult "a young probationer and candidate" for legal honors by asking him a single question. The Northern Circuit contained some good lawyers, among them Toombs, who was just beginning to make a reputation.

A circuit was really a circuit in Georgia; for the lawyers rode on horseback from one county-seat to another, and, if we may rely on the evidence at hand, got an immense number of cases, and charged heavy fees. The settling up of new lands, the transferring of property from the older States, and the litigation incident to property in slaves, afforded business enough for the civil practitioner; and the still unsettled nature of the population kept the criminal lawyer constantly occupied. After the panic of 1837, there was still more litigation; and it is said that in one term of court in one county Toombs returned two hundred cases, and took judgment for over \$200,000.

Both Toombs and Stephens evidently made

<sup>1</sup> The well-known author of "Flush Times in Alabama."

large incomes from their professions after they had been practising only a few years, for the period was a halcyon one for lawyers throughout the Gulf States. The methods of the two men were as different, however, as their success was uniform. Stephens, we are told, "would begin his talk to the jury with calmness, and build upon his opening until he warmed up into eloquence;" while Toombs "would plunge immediately into his fierce and impassioned oratory, and pour his torrent of wit, eloquence, logic, and satire upon judge and jury." Toombs would not appear in a case unless he felt that his client really had justice on his side, which is a point to be remembered when we come to consider his subsequent change of parties; on the other hand, he would cause his client untold anxiety by his apparent carelessness as to details, and his reliance upon his own powers after he got into the courtroom. But, in fact, he generally managed to get at the gist of every matter before he came to argue it; and this will be found to be more or less true of his political career. Stephens, on the other hand, never omitted thorough preparation of his cases; he knew every point he wished to make, and the order in which to make them, and this is pre-eminently true of his political reasoning.

As to the actual eloquence of the two men,

it is hard to reach any conclusion. Both could carry away a jury or a hustings crowd, and the secret of their power lay not so much in the matter of their speeches as in the way they delivered them. Yet never did two orators present a greater contrast—Toombs with his strength of body and voice, and impetuous force of conviction; Stephens with his puny frame, thin voice, and calmly reasoned persuasiveness. They may not have been as great orators as their admirers have asserted, but the fact remains that they exerted great power over all sorts and conditions of men.

But successful young lawyers were, and to some extent are, the proper timber out of which to make legislators; so we need not wonder to find Stephens elected to the Georgia Lower House in 1836, and Toombs in 1837. The former won his seat in spite of the fact that he opposed the doctrine of nullification in a county which, being not far from the Carolina line, rather favored that political panacea; the latter was returned as a Whig from Wilkes County, along with two Democrats. Toombs, however, had recently done a little Indian fighting, which added to his prestige; while Stephens had been doing some moral fighting against the popular vigilance committees formed to punish persons who were caught circulating abolition documents. Stephens's suc-

cess is, therefore, the more remarkable; and he shows in this first canvass the same endeavor to do justice to the North as well as to the strict letter of the Constitution that was afterwards to characterize him as a statesman of national reputation.

We need not follow with any closeness the careers of our young legislators, except in so far as light is thereby thrown on their subsequent services to the nation. Both were Whigs who believed in extending railroads in Georgia, and the State owes to them much of her present prosperity in this respect. Both resisted the pernicious demand on the part of the Democratic majority that Senator Berrien should resign his seat in the United States Senate because he did not represent faithfully the views of that majority, Stephens's report in this connection being an elaborate and logical constitutional argument worthy of its author's subsequent reputation.

Toombs deserves credit, in his turn, for the way in which he resisted the popular scheme for creating a public loan for the benefit of sufferers by recent floods, a measure which had been paralleled in South Carolina in the case of the great Charleston fire of a few years before; he deserves, perhaps, equal credit for the way in which he managed his friend Stephens's law business when the latter was compelled to take a long journey

to restore his shattered health. Toombs even offered to bear the expenses of the trip. But we must pass on to more important matters; yet not before a slight account is given of the way the puny invalid impressed himself first upon his legislative colleagues.

There was a debate going on about the construction of the Western and Atlantic Railroad, which was needed to give the products of the trans-Alleghany region — especially of East Tennessee — an entrance to Georgia and thence to the sea. Railways were new and comparatively untried things then; and there was even more ignorance about them in the legislature than is the case nowadays, which is saying a good deal. A great amount of nonsense had been talked, when, to quote the words of an eye-witness,<sup>1</sup> the House was startled out of its weariness by hearing “from under the gallery a clear, shrill voice,” exclaiming, “Mr. Speaker.”

“Every eye was turned to the thin, attenuated form of a mere boy, with a black, gleaming eye and cadaverous face. The attention became breathless. The House was enchained for half an hour by a new speaker, and one with new views of the question, such as had not been discussed or hinted at by others.

“When he sat down, there was a burst of applause from

<sup>1</sup> The Hon. Iverson L. Harris, quoted by Johnson and Browne, pp. 127, 128.

a full gallery, and many of us on the floor joined in the chorus. That speech was electrical. It gave life to a dull debate; it aided immensely the passage of the bill for the survey of the road, and the appropriation for it. . . . Need I say that man was Alexander H. Stephens?"

This early student of railroads will hardly be recognized in the morbid individual from whose diary his biographers, with an amusing *naïveté*, give us so many choice selections. Stephens, whenever he emulated Samson by going out and shaking himself, was a politician, — no, a statesman and orator worthy of any man's admiration. Stephens, when he attempted to set down his reflections on life, death, and immortality, when he tried to pose as a philosopher or critic or historian, was simply a Scotch-Irishman of some talents and reading, taking himself with prodigious seriousness, and writing stuff that came perilously near the point that separates the commonplace from the banal.

His letters to his half-brother Linton, whom he dearly loved, and whom he trained to fill positions of responsibility in Georgia, give abundant proofs of the truth of this statement. He passes most absurdly unhistorical judgments with regard to the degeneracy of modern peoples as compared with the nations of antiquity, and gives some ludicrously bizarre appreciations with regard to the relative merits of Scott and Bulwer. Even in his political speeches he cannot altogether keep back from the

yawning precipice of the ridiculous, as when, in response to a toast delivered at Crawfordville on July 4, 1839, he concluded with this remarkable slander upon the ancients of whom he was so proud; "*Henry Clay and Martin Van Buren*: candidates for the next presidency. When the strife is between Cæsar and Pompey, the patriot should rally to the standard of neither." Which meant that Mr. Stephens wished that that obstreperous champion of States' rights, ex-Governor Troup, should be advanced to an office in which he would have a splendid opportunity for displaying his two chief propensities — for holding fast and growling.

But this is nothing compared with some of the moralizing in which Stephens was fond of indulging. If he had been an Obermann or an Amiel, his biographers would have been justified in reproducing it; but he was neither, and the only advantage that has resulted from their misguided admiration for all their subject ever said or wrote has been the light that is thrown on his mental attainments.

The student can easily perceive that at bottom Mr. Stephens possessed talents merely, not genius; that his vision was bounded the moment he passed outside the sphere of present party politics or of American political history as that had been shaped by Jefferson and his followers. No more than

another great Scotch-Irishman, Calhoun, was he able to become a political philosopher in any true sense of the term. He was an able analyst and a fine pleader; hence, as an expounder of a particular view of constitutional interpretation, and a writer of a party history worthy of high rank among *mémoires pour servir*, he is easily first among Southern statesmen of the third quarter of this century.

To grasp American history as a whole, however, and to lead his people along new paths, was beyond his power, and beyond that of any man then living in the South. He did check his people, and when they rushed past him, he followed on, to die with them if need be; and when the crisis was over he sat down to write their most elaborate and powerful vindication. But he had not outlived the defects of his qualities, and he couched the vindication in an outworn and far from effective literary form.

But we must retrace our steps, remarking, as we do so, that none of this criticism is applicable to Toombs, who was not the man to reflect, check, and defend, but to leap to conclusions, push on, and attack. He was not even solicitous to defend his own consistency, that carefully guarded heel of Achilles to the ordinary politician.

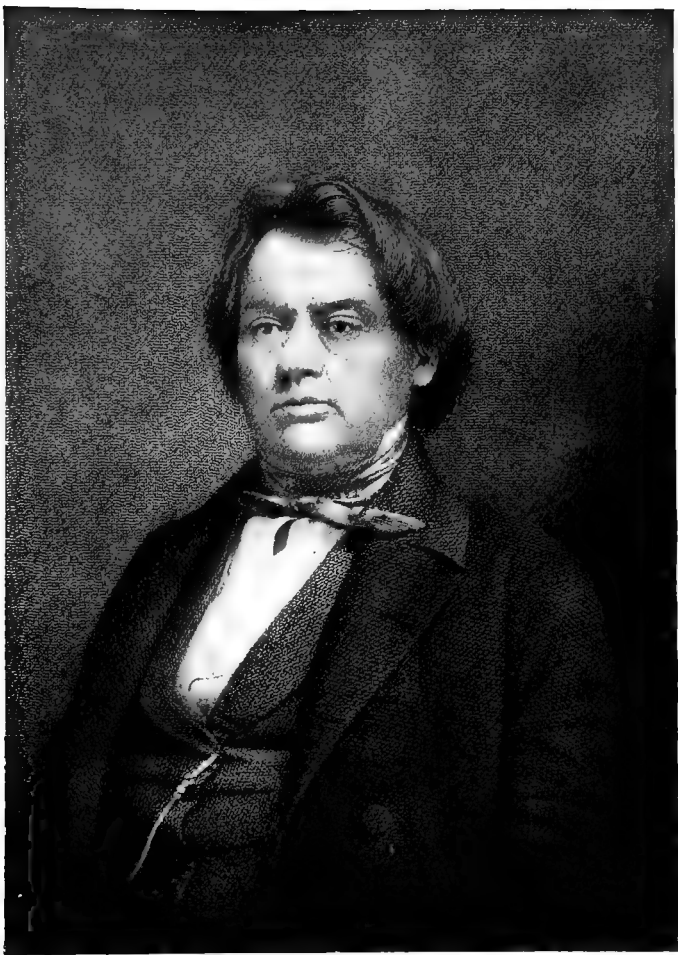
“‘How is this, Mr. Toombs?’ shouted a Democrat, . . . ‘here is a vote of yours in the House Journal I do not like.’



“ ‘ Well, my friend, there are several there that I do not like; now, what are you going to do about it? ’ ”

What could the astonished voter do about it, and what can any one do about it now, except to wish that a little of Toombs's courage, not his rashness, could be found in the average politician of the present day?

In 1843 Stephens was nominated for Congress to fill a vacancy. He had a majority of about three thousand to overcome, and did it after an exciting and amusing campaign, in which he was often taken for a boy. The boy turned out, however, to be the best-informed man in the Whig party on the various issues of the day, as well as on the history and theory of the government of which he was ambitious of forming a small part. He overcame, in joint debate, the Democratic champion orator, Judge Colquitt, and added greatly to his own reputation as a speaker and debater. To be candid, however, many of the stories told of exciting political debates in the far South seem to turn rather on the folly of one speaker than on the genius of the other. For example, in this very debate, Stephens triumphed over Judge Colquitt by showing that one of his legislative votes, for which the Judge was twitting him, had been given for a measure which the Judge had himself favored in the Senate of the



ROBERT TOOMBS.



same legislature. Triumph over such a short-memoried adversary may have delighted the Georgia crowd of fifty-three years ago, but is hardly thrilling as we read of it to-day.

When Stephens got to Congress he astonished friends and foes alike by arguing against the constitutionality of his own election, on the ground that Georgia should have complied with the law of 1842, dividing the State into congressional districts—he having been elected on a general ticket. The position he took seems a little bizarre, and did so to his colleague, the Hon. Wm. H. Stiles, with whom a personal difficulty was for a while apprehended by the pygmy novitiate.

But Stephens's argument in favor of the constitutionality of the Act of 1842 is strong and apparently conclusive. The next year Georgia changed to the new system of districts, and an interesting question presented itself to the Whigs. They wished to run Toombs for Congress; but if Wilkes and Taliaferro Counties were put in the same district, as would be natural, the party would lose the services of one of its favorites. They were spared the necessity of making a choice, however, by managing to put the two counties into different districts; and the two friends were enabled to begin a long congressional career together.

Toombs came in with flying colors, having

spoken for two hours at Augusta against the great South Carolina champion of Democracy, George McDuffie, who had been imported to argue against the bank and tariff, that Toombs defended. Some time previous to this, Toombs had himself crossed the Savannah, and met McDuffie on his own soil. Mr. Stovall says, with perhaps pardonable exaggeration:—

“When the rash young Georgian crossed over to Willington, S. C., to meet the lion in his den, Toombs rode horseback; and it was noted that his shirt-front was stained with tobacco-juice, and yet Toombs was a remarkably handsome man. ‘Genius sat upon his brow, and his eyes were as black as death and bigger than an ox’s.’ His presence captivated even the idolators of McDuffie. His argument and invective, his over-powering eloquence, linger in the memory of old men now. McDuffie said of him: ‘I have heard John Randolph of Roanoke, and met Burgess of Rhode Island, but this wild Georgian is a Mirabeau.’”<sup>1</sup>

So these old-time Southerners spoke of one another, and so their biographers still write of them.

Texas and the Mexican war, together with the Oregon question, were, of course, the matters uppermost in the minds of our two Georgia statesmen at this period. Before Toombs’s advent, Stephens had supported Tyler’s joint-resolution scheme in a speech showing plainly both the

<sup>1</sup> Stovall’s “Toombs,” pp. 45, 46.

strength and weakness of his mind. He objected to the idea that it was the duty of the Federal Government to admit Texas on the ground that slavery would thereby be strengthened; for, as he maintained, slavery was a domestic institution, which Congress ought neither to strengthen nor to weaken. This position he held consistently, as we shall see.

He refuted the idea that the United States could not acquire territory; but he indulged in some shadowy reasoning, and not a little historical inaccuracy, when he maintained that in 1789 North Carolina "had the right and power to remain out" of the Union. He seems, too, to have had little or no doubt as to the constitutionality of resolving a union between Texas and the United States; but then in this matter even so keen a constitutionalist as Calhoun had gone astray. Yet Stephens, though determined to maintain slavery, was not so daft on the subject as Calhoun; and certain expressions in this very speech gave offence until he explained that he did not regard American slavery as being of the same genus as that recognized by the code of Justinian, — a position which is either false or true according to the purposes for which it is used in argument.

With regard to the Mexican War, Stephens and Toombs united in opposing Polk's policy, partly,

no doubt, because he was a Democrat and they were Whigs, but mainly because they saw clearly that the war was one of Polk's own making, and because they were opposed on principle to the use of force in adding to the territory of the Union. This was but consistent with their contention that force could not be used to maintain the Union should any State or States wish to withdraw from it.

They saw, too, with Calhoun, that the new territory to be acquired would raise the slavery question once more in a formidable shape. It is almost needless to add that both opposed the war policy with regard to Oregon; Toombs making a fine maiden speech on the subject, in which he proved himself to be anything but a fire-eater. He also proved that for all his congenital rashness he was still able to argue calmly about matters of policy, and that he was not obliged to defend his votes as another Georgian, General Clinch, is said to have done on one occasion. The roll was being called in the House; and the general, who had been sent for, came in "all vexed and mad, and puffing and blowing," and "answered to his name at the top of his voice, 'No!'" Stephens, who was at his side, said, "'General, say *Here*; it is a call of the House;" to which he replied, "Oh, damn it! I don't care. I'm against all they do, anyhow!"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Johnston and Browne's "Stephens," p. 193.

The position of Stephens in the House is well indicated by his important Resolutions of 1847, by which he cornered the Democrats as to the real object of the war, making them confess in a negative way that it was being carried on for purposes of conquest, and furnished the Whigs with a platform on the subject. But his *Resolutions* were, from the nature of the case, powerless against the celebrated *Wilmot Proviso*, which had been added the year before to the bill appropriating \$2,000,000 for the purpose of settling the war and acquiring territory by negotiation.

David Wilmot of Pennsylvania had offered "an addition to the bill, applying to any newly created Territory the provision of the Ordinance of 1787, that 'neither Slavery nor involuntary Servitude shall ever exist in any part of such territory, except for crime, whereof the party shall first be duly convicted.' " <sup>1</sup>

This Proviso was destined to be tacked on to Territorial bills for several years, and to cause consternation and anger to Southern men, whether Democrats or Whigs. Northern Democrats and Whigs in the main supported it; and it then passed the House, bringing the sectional issue fairly forward, and seeming to the South to be a flagrant breach of the Missouri Compromise. This it was not, technically speaking; for that Compromise had

<sup>1</sup> Johnston, "American Politics," p. 144.



applied to the territory obtained at the time of the Louisiana purchase.

It was, however, a radical reversal of policy ; and in all the circumstances Southern men, not being able to appreciate the Northern position with regard to the moral evil of slavery, were justified in looking upon it both as an insult to their section, and a provocation to strife. They could not see what it meant to the Northern conscience, or how far it was an answer to their own rash conduct in plunging the country into the Mexican War. They knew that they were fighting bravely in that war, and that large accessions of territory would be due to their exertions ; consequently they felt justified in demanding that at least the Missouri line should be extended, and a portion of the new territory be thrown open to their "favorite institution."

Not perceiving or admitting for a moment, as their fathers had done, that that institution was an evil one, they clamored about a breach of faith, and technically had a case. Some even, as at the time of the Missouri Compromise, went farther, and declared that they had a right to carry slavery into any Territory, and that Congress had no constitutional right to prevent them. These extremists were destined by the very nature of the problem to carry the day by and by ; but, meanwhile, even moderates like Stephens protested

against the new Northern claims, and predicted woe to both sections.

In his speech of Feb. 12, 1847, these warnings found vent; Stephens declaring, with little prescience as to the Compromise of 1850, that Clay was no longer in the nation's councils to avert the impending evil. He would not say much about slavery, but it was sufficient for him and his constituents that the morality of that institution stood "upon a basis as firm as the Bible." As long as Christianity lasted, the relation of master and slave could never be regarded as "an offence against the Divine laws." He congratulated himself and the South for being free from pharisaical self-righteousness, intimating quite plainly that Northern anti-slavery men were not. He would not argue the question from the point of view of a political institution. That subject belonged exclusively to the States, where Congress would do well to leave it. Nor would he say whether the South would "submit to the threatened proscription," since "the language of defiance should always be the last alternative" (*sic*). But as he valued "this Union and all the blessings which its security and permanence" promised, he invoked gentlemen not to put the principles of the Proviso to a test.

I have paraphrased the important part of this speech in order to make it clear that the man who

was undoubtedly the most moderate, as well as the ablest, member of the lower House from the South at this exciting period, was as clear as to the right of his section to hold slaves, and to appeal to force in the last resort in order to maintain this institution, as any pronounced disunionist could have been. He has advanced even beyond John Randolph's position; slavery is to him an institution sanctioned by Heaven, and he will hold to it just as long as he holds to his religion.

Such being the temper of a man like Stephens, and that of Garrison, Giddings, and many another representative Northerner being equally firm, what was to be expected but a civil war? The extremists of both sides were nearer right than the moderates, who maintained that the Union could still be maintained and slavery still protected. Yet the moderates deserve our thanks for having averted the conflict until the necessarily resulting war could be waged with sufficient zeal to destroy slavery and preserve the Union intact.

Toombs's conduct at this time deserves less notice than Stephens's, simply because the former, though a Whig and standing by his colleague, especially in rejecting the Clayton Compromise, and in advocating Taylor for the presidency, represented through his temper the more impetuous elements of the Southern character. His audacious defiance of the majority in the exciting con-

test for Speaker in 1849 deserves, however, to be noticed. The proposition was, that, under the circumstances, the House rule should be changed, and the Speaker elected on a plurality of votes, provided it represented a majority of a quorum. Toombs declared that the House, until it organized, could not pass this or any other rule. He was called to order, but continued to speak; a perfect babel ensued, but he could not be put down. He believed he was right, as he certainly was technically; and nothing short of overpowering force could have put him down.

It is doing him a wrong to say, as Dr. Von Holst does,<sup>1</sup> that he threw "the House into a condition of indescribable and disgraceful confusion." The confusion was indescribable and disgraceful; but it was made so by the nature of the question over which it arose, and not by the defiant and courageous opposition of Toombs. If he had stood out in the same way for the Free-soil interests, Dr. Von Holst would have used far different language; yet Toombs was as sincere in his way as the Free-soilers were in theirs; and even the conservative Stephens, who was not prepared to go so far as Toombs in proclaiming secession to be a proper answer for the Wilmot Proviso, stood shoulder to shoulder with his colleague in the fight over the speakership.

<sup>1</sup> In his "Constitutional History."

Stephens could argue calmly up to a certain point, but beyond that even he would not go. "I have no idea," he wrote to his half-brother Linton, "when we shall elect a Speaker; but if the South would follow my lead, and act with my spirit, NEVER until the North came to terms with us upon our rights. This is my kind of resistance, at least for the present."

When Howell Cobb of Georgia was elected Speaker later on, Stephens gave another proof of the fact that his nature was Southern at bottom, by declaring that he would not serve on the committee he had been placed on.<sup>1</sup> It is curious, further, to note that Stephens seems to have got into a far greater number of personal difficulties than Toombs did, — in the summer of 1848 he was nearly stabbed to death in Georgia by a Judge Cone, — a fact which is partly accounted for by his sensitiveness as to his size, and his fear that people would try to impose on him. But whether high-tempered or not, he was cool enough to note the fact that while the Northern members were daily consolidating their forces, the Southern men were hard to keep together, and could rarely be counted on in an emergency. His letters are filled with mournful ejaculations as to the impossibility of keeping Southern members in their places and sober.

<sup>1</sup> Johnston and Browne's "Stephens," p. 241.

With regard to the next important phase of political action, the famous Compromise of 1850, Toombs and Stephens were united, and did yeomen service in securing its adoption. Toombs furnished much of the energy needed; Stephens, it would seem, furnished much of the counsel. Indeed, I think it is almost impossible to avoid the conclusion that the intellect of the younger and punier man dominated that of his colleague during the earlier part of Stephens's career, although not infrequently Toombs's passions led him further than Stephens would have been willing to go. We have Toombs, and not Stephens, in the following utterances, which created a commotion in the House:—

“Deprive us of this right [of carrying slavery into either all or half the Territories], and appropriate this common property to yourselves; it is then your government, not mine. Then I am its enemy; and I will then, if I can, bring my children and my constituents to the altar of liberty, and like Hamilcar, I will swear them to eternal hostility to your foul domination. Give us our just rights, and we are ready, as ever heretofore, to stand by the Union, every part of it, and its every interest. Refuse it, and, for one, I will strike for independence.”

It is a little curious to find this bold Georgia Hamilcar playing the part of a mild Cicero, and having Western Congressmen at his house for conferences which were to make smooth the path of

the Great Pacificator, who had returned to the Senate somewhat like Aristides on the eve of the battle of Salamis, to strike a last blow for his country.

Yet certain it is that Toombs and Stephens and Cobb were greatly instrumental in pushing through the famous Compromise of 1850. They were willing that California should come in as a free State, for they were shrewd enough to see that nothing could now be done for slavery there. They were willing, too, that the Territories of Utah and New Mexico should be organized without the Wilmot Proviso, for this gave up the principle of Congressional restriction against which they had been contending. They were willing to abolish the slave-trade in the District of Columbia, provided slavery therein were not interfered with, and provided also that they got a more strenuous fugitive-slave law.

These were the main features of the Compromise actually passed, and subsequently indorsed by the country at large after Webster had lost his reputation by supporting it. They could not foresee that the last provision, the fugitive-slave law, would undo all the rest of their work, by arousing the North to that height of indignation which is never felt except when we see and hear with our actual senses deeds of injustice and violence.

They did foresee, however, that they would

have a hot political fight on their hands as soon as they got back to Georgia. That Commonwealth, goaded on by her own extremists, as well as by the action of sister States like South Carolina and Mississippi, was apparently ripe for disunion; and some of Toombs's own speeches in Congress had been used in fermenting the liquor in the malodorous political cask. A State Convention had been called; for Georgia and several of the States had chosen delegates for the Nashville Convention, — a body which actually got together, but with less secrecy than the Hartford Convention, and with equally intangible results.

Toombs and Stephens were bound to oppose this movement, not only because they had taken a prominent part in pushing the Compromise through, but also because they still loved the Union, and believed that the Southern States were not in a condition to form one as good. Toombs issued an address, maintaining that while the South had not secured her full rights, she had "compromised no right, surrendered no principle, and lost not an inch of ground" in the contest.

He called upon all men of integrity to cast aside their political differences, and join to save Georgia and the Union. He took the stump also, and, aided by Stephens and Cobb, managed to get a large majority of Union men chosen for the State Convention. This was the pivotal point of the



political movement of the South for some years to come. Secession was impossible if Georgia barred the way; and Georgia took her stand for Union on the celebrated "Georgia Platform," adopted in December, 1850, by a convention called in the interests of secession. The Platform urged mutual concessions between the sections, and abidance by the Compromise. On it the new "Constitutional Union" party took its stand; and the next year, after an exciting contest, Howell Cobb was elected governor upon it, Toombs was made Senator, and Stephens was returned to Congress. The Southern-rights men who opposed it, and stood by the Nashville Convention and ultra States'-rights, were completely defeated—their time was not yet.

That Toombs went to the Senate (he had previously been re-elected to Congress) instead of Stephens, is probably due to the fact that his energy kept him more before the people during the exciting campaign. He certainly appears to have borne the brunt of the attack, for he seemed to make a more complete *volte-face* than Stephens, in view of his violent speeches in the House; and as he had struggled more, he was given the higher reward. Certainly he fought a hot fight, and won by his pluck.

Accused of giving himself aristocratic airs by the way he travelled with fine horses and servants

galore, he proclaimed that he made plenty of money by his practice, and would spend it as he chose. "Perish such demagoguery — such senseless stuff!" He was applauded to the echo, as he was when his friendship made him declare that Alexander H. Stephens "carried more brains and more soul for the least flesh of any man God Almighty ever made."

This statement rather contradicted a humorous story Stephens once told on himself. He had spoken in Cherokee in 1843; and after his speech was over, a plain-spoken old man came up to him and said, "Well, if I had been put in this road to shoot a smart man, you would have passed safe, sure." It required a sense of humor to be able to tell this story on himself — was it a sense of humor, or was it sentimentality, that made Stephens in the Presidential election of 1852, between Scott and Pierce, cast his vote for Daniel Webster a few days after the death of that statesman?

But the lull produced by the Compromise of 1850 was not destined to be of any long duration, and Stephens could not afford to continue to cast away his votes on dead men. The Platte country, afterwards better known as Kansas and Nebraska, was now ready for Territorial organization; and Northern leaders like Sumner desired to apply to it the principles of the Missouri Compromise, since it was a part of the Louisiana cession, and lay

north of 36° 30'. The Southern men replied that the Northern men had broken the Missouri Compromise, that after all it was not a solemn compact, and that the Compromise of 1850 had practically recognized the policy of no interference on the part of Congress with regard to slavery in the Territories.

As usual, both parties were partly right and partly wrong; but the Southern men had found a new ally in the person of Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois. Douglas had taken up, and made practically his own, the doctrine of squatter sovereignty; that is, the doctrine that the people of each Territory should allow or prohibit slavery as they pleased. On this theory there was no place for the Missouri Compromise; and the Southerners were satisfied, since they were given a nominally even chance with the North.

It is a sign of the weakness of a cause when its advocates lay stress on technicalities, and declare themselves wounded in some intangible way in their over-susceptible honors; judged by this criterion, the cause of the extreme pro-slavery men was in a very bad way between 1850-1860. Outspoken Southerners like Toombs would confess that they did not believe that slavery was at all practicable in Kansas or Nebraska, yet they would foam at the mouth at any attempt to deprive them of the right to endeavor to carry their slaves into

those Territories. There was a good deal of human nature in it all, however. Few of us would strive earnestly to make water flow up hill of its own accord; yet, if we did try it on our own land, we should resent even our own brother's endeavoring to stop us.

The Kansas-Nebraska Bill of 1854 was passed by Northern Democrats who followed Douglas in the main, by Southern Democrats and by Southern Whigs like Stephens and Toombs, who had, however, shed the party name. Its passage was a signal for the dissolution of the Whig party, whose Northern members, first called anti-Nebraska men, were afterwards numbered among the Republicans.

Stephens seems to have rejoiced at the success of a measure which gave the death-blow to the party he had served so well; for he wrote to his half-brother, "I took the reins in my hand, applied whip and spur, and brought the 'wagon' out at eleven o'clock P.M. Glory enough for one day." He was justified in his language so far as it implied that he was one of the leaders of the House, but his wagon was not destined to carry him very far.

Meanwhile, in the Senate, Toombs was not content with such an humble conveyance, but mounted a war-chariot, from which he astounded the gentlemen who asked him and his associates whether the doctrine of squatter sovereignty would not

legalize the existence of polygamy in a Territory, by proclaiming that it would. "It is just what they have a right to do," said he of the inhabitants of his proposed Mohammedan Territories. "When the people of Utah make their organic law for admission to the Union, they have a right to approximate, as nearly as they please, the domestic manners of the Patriarchs. Connecticut may establish polygamy to-morrow. The people of Massachusetts may do the same. How did they become possessed of greater rights, in this or any other respects, than the people of Utah? The right in both cases has the same foundation, — the sovereignty of the people."

Toombs concluded by declaring that if the Chinese and other distant peoples were brought under our flag, he would be willing to extend to them the rather liberal principle he had just been advocating. He did not carry the matter farther, and argue that the ambassador-senator of such a people as the Malays would have a right to run amuck among his polygamous colleagues from Connecticut and Massachusetts, as well as among his slave-owning brothers from the Utopia south of Mason and Dixon's Line.

But it would not be fair to Toombs not to give an extract from a speech delivered a little later, in answer to Hale of New Hampshire. He might push his States'-rights doctrine to absurd

extremes ; but he would not insult human nature and a large section of the Union by supposing for one moment, as some Southern politicians did in their madness, that the North would not fight when once roused :—

“ He told us the North would fight. I believe that nobody ever doubted [?] that any portion of the United States would fight on a proper occasion. Sir, if there shall ever be civil war in this country, when honest men shall set about cutting each other’s throats, those who are least to be depended upon in a fight will be the people who set them at it. There are courageous and honest men enough in both sections to fight. . . . No, sir ; there is no question of courage involved. The people of both sections of the Union have illustrated their courage on too many battlefields to be questioned. They have shown their fighting qualities, shoulder to shoulder, whenever their country has called upon them ; but that they may never come in contact with each other in fratricidal war, should be the ardent wish and earnest desire of every true man and honest patriot.”

Meanwhile Stephens, in the House, was maintaining his position as leader, and repelling assaults upon the South in his own quiet way. He boasted that it was the North, not the South, that came to the general government asking money for internal improvements ; but he forgot that the South was at the same time asking the general government to protect an institution that was the very reverse of an internal improvement, that was,

indeed, an internal cancer preying upon the vitals of the whole nation. He defended slavery, as usual, by quoting Scripture, and pointing to the fact that the slaves were better fed and cared for than they had been as savages in Africa. Like every other Southerner of his day, he was utterly impervious to the argument that slavery is morally wrong, because no human being has a right to assume perpetual control over the destiny of another human being, seeing that no human being has ever been able properly to control his own destiny.

Stephens and his compatriots were perfectly willing to assume this awful responsibility, because it had been handed on to them by their fathers, and because they did not fully realize its awful nature. Neither did they realize the harm that slavery was doing to the master class. Stephens would quote statistics as to crime, wealth, *et cetera*, and prove to his own satisfaction that Georgia was the equal of any State in the Union; but he could not see, and could hardly be expected to have seen, that slavery had lowered the tone of Southern statesmanship, and stifled Southern literature and commerce. He was more successful, surely, when telling some humorous anecdote or saying such as this of a Western lawyer, who concluded his argument by remarking, "May it please your Honor, I know nothing of the mysteries of the law of this case, and my only

reliance is to trust to the sublimity of luck, and float on the surface of the occasion."

Stephens does not owe his position merely to luck; and if he had simply floated, like so many politicians, on the surface of the occasion, he would not have floated long — the whirlwind of civil war would have swept him clean out of sight forever; but he was certainly drifting and swaying to and fro during this momentous period.

Neither Stephens nor Toombs drifted, however, when Know-Nothingism invaded Georgia, and threatened to sweep the State. Stephens published a strong letter against the secret and narrow policy of the party which impudently assumed the title of "American," and Toombs helped him to some extent in the campaign against it. Stephens had resolved not to run again for Congress; but he was taunted with being afraid of suffering defeat at the hands of the Know-Nothings, so he changed his mind, and announced himself as a candidate for re-election. He made a vigorous canvass, declaring in a speech at Augusta that he was "afraid of nothing on earth, or above the earth, or under the earth, but to do wrong." He was in weak health, but rode and drove in sunshine and shower, day after day, to keep his engagements. "My God," exclaimed one of his hearers, "there is nothing about him but lungs and brains." There was something else — an indomitable heart.



Stephens was elected by the largest majority he had ever received, and Know-Nothingism got its death-blow. Toombs, meanwhile, was travelling in Europe, amusing people by his free-handed Georgia ways. When he got back he accepted an invitation to lecture in Boston on the subject of slavery. It was a rather rash undertaking, and one that had been refused by several other Southerners; but Toombs would go anywhere. He would have defended wine-bibbing before the Sultan, or polygamy in Queen Victoria's drawing-room, if he had believed in those customs; so he felt no hesitation in addressing a large crowd in Tremont Temple on an institution about which he believed himself to be informed. The lecture — for it was delivered from notes — was about as strong a defence of slavery as could well have been made. It was moderate in tone and patriotic. That it contained fallacies was inevitable; but it must have surprised those who heard it, as it surprises those few persons who read it to-day, by its calmness and moderation, considering its source. On the whole, it was well received, and will bear perusal to-day.

Probably Boston would not have sat so complacently under the spell of Toombs's eloquence, had his address been delivered in June instead of in January; for in May the assault on Sumner occurred, which Toombs was accused of abetting.

This he denied; but the growing bitterness of feeling over the Kansas struggle prevented him and most other Southerners from seeing what an unfortunate affair the attack was to the nation, and particularly to the South.

Waiving the question of the propriety of personal violence at any time, it was especially unfortunate that the Brooks-Sumner incident should have occurred contemporaneously with the incursions of Border Ruffians into Kansas. Southern men were forced by the exigencies of the political situation into false positions which belied their real sentiments. Few of them actually sympathized with the efforts of the Missouri roughs, except in so far as these efforts appeared necessary to illustrate the vitality of the Southern contention that slavery was free to go into any Territory.

The gentleman planter of Virginia or South Carolina would have been as uncomfortable among the Missouri gentry who rode over the Kansas border to vote, whoop, and get on a spree, as the merchant of Boston or New York would have been, had he found himself, later on, in John Brown's small band on the march for Harper's Ferry. Yet the planter, sitting on his veranda, smoked his pipe, and defended the Border Ruffians; while the merchant in his counting-room or in his cosy library read his newspaper accounts of John Brown's raid and hanging, and grew ex-

cited, and talked about adding another chapter to a new edition of Foxe's "Book of Martyrs."

A great issue in politics has much the effect of the colored lights cast upon a modern stage, only each party accuses the other of color-blindness, and with substantial justice. The Brooks-Sumner affair, Bleeding Kansas, the John Brown Raid, are admirable tests of the ability of the American historian: if he be at all a partisan, they affect him as the loadstone mountain did the ships of the Arabian Tale, — all the bolts are drawn out from his historical craft, and the erstwhile proudly sailing vessel lies a mere mass of planks and cordage upon the waters.

The Southern historian proceeds to dilate upon the shortcomings of Sumner in point of taste, and has an easy time in showing that he often talked in a most exasperating fashion; the Northern historian vituperates Brooks, and has an easy time in showing that if political and other injuries were always redressed by an appeal to blows, the world would soon relapse into barbarism. But it is rare that either Southerner or Northerner manages to transport himself from his comfortable study into the tumultuous congressional arena of 1856; hence it is rare to find an historian who can treat Sumner and Brooks, Border Ruffian and Free Settler, John Brown and Henry A. Wise, with dispassionate candor and fairness.

It would be idle, as well as impossible in the space at my command, to go into a discussion of the votes and speeches of Stephens and Toombs at this exciting period. They took the pro-slavery side, as might have been expected, and argued for the admission of Kansas under the Lecompton Constitution; though Toombs seems to have recognized that Kansas was bound to be a free State, and that the Lecompton Constitution was only technically one that could be ratified at Washington.

He was even liberal enough to stand by Douglas when the latter lost popularity with the Southern extremists by opposing the Lecompton instrument. Stephens treated the House to some rather amusing Biblical citations with regard to Abraham, and some learned comments on the use of "doulos" in the New Testament. Both men rejoiced when the Dred Scott decision upheld in the fullest manner their claim that Congress could not interfere with slavery in the Territories; and both were opposed on practical grounds to the position taken by the ultra Southern men, headed by Jefferson Davis, that Congress ought to protect slavery in the Territories. There was even some talk of Stephens as a Democratic candidate to succeed President Buchanan; but he did not indulge the delusion, and, indeed, retired, as he thought for good, from political life, delivering a

farewell address to his constituents in August, 1858.

Toombs still continued at his post ; and the John Brown raid called from him a speech which was widely commented on, and was dubbed the "Door-sill Speech." He was evidently more alarmed by the way the North had supported Brown than by anything that had yet happened, and he rushed to the conclusion that the election of a Republican President would be sufficient occasion for the South to secede. Stephens, being out of the turmoil, counselled patience ; but patience was hardly the key-note of these sentences from Toombs's famous speech of Jan. 24, 1860 : —

"Your honor [freemen of Georgia] is involved, your faith is plighted. I know you feel a stain as a wound. Your peace, your social system, your friends, are involved. Never permit this Federal government to pass into the traitors' hands of the Black Republican party. It has already declared war against you and your institutions. It every day commits acts of war against you ; it has already compelled you to arm for your defence. Listen to no vain babbling, to no treacherous jargon about 'overt acts' ; they have already been committed. Defend yourselves ! The enemy is at your door ; wait not to meet him at your hearthstone ; meet him at the door-sill, and drive him from the Temple of Liberty, or pull down its pillars, and involve him in a common ruin."

But Georgia was not destined to have the questionable honor of playing the Southern Samson ;

that was reserved for South Carolina, who gave a sort of preliminary rehearsal at the Charleston Convention of the Democratic party which met in April, 1860. Douglas was the most conspicuous candidate, but the Southern men demanded permission either to name the candidate or to frame the platform; neither of which demands could be yielded by the Northern members, since it was apparent that no Southern man, or Northern man with pro-slavery sentiments, could be elected, nor a Northern man with anti-slavery sentiments on a platform embodying the ultra Southern claim for congressional protection of slavery in the Territories.

The Douglas men were willing to promise to stand by the Dred Scott decision, which was a liberal proposition; but Douglas's utterances with regard to "unfriendly legislation" inside the Territories themselves had rendered him an object of distrust, if not of loathing, to Southern extremists. So the more violent Southern delegates seceded; and the result, as every one knows, was the splitting up of the Democratic party, and the election of Lincoln by a strictly sectional vote. Stephens did not indorse the secession, but Toombs did on the whole. The two friends, therefore, parted in politics, but for a short period only, and with very little bitterness, Toombs heading the Breckinridge electors, and Stephens those of Douglas.

The effect of the election of Lincoln was almost electrical in the South. There was nothing surprising in it, and the South had done much to bring it about; but it was an event in connection with which a great many threats had been made, which would now have to be carried into effect, unless the pro-slavery extremists meant to back down, which, to do them justice, they had little or no intention of doing. Yet there must be an effort, especially in Georgia, which had prided herself on her Unionism, to act with deliberation; so Mr. Stephens, who was known to be both a safe man and a patriot, was invited to address the legislature of the State, and set forth his views on the crisis.

He did so in his masterly speech of Nov. 14, 1860, the best known and worthiest of his life. It was made off-hand, and produced a profound impression. It was patriotic, as a Southerner understood patriotism, and clear as to the ultimate right of secession, but showed that Lincoln's election did not at all mean the downfall of slavery in the States. In short, it counselled patience, and opposed immediate secession. It was widely circulated in the North, and produced an interesting correspondence between its author and the President-elect. But perhaps the pleasantest thing one can say about the address is to copy *verbatim* the short speech which Robert Toombs, who, it

will be remembered, was at this very time estranged from Stephens politically, made at its conclusion : —

“Fellow-citizens” [said Toombs], “we have just listened to a speech from one of the brightest intellects and purest patriots that now lives. I move that this meeting now adjourn with three cheers for Alexander H. Stephens of Georgia.”

Robert Toombs had his faults, but he had his virtues also, chief among which was his loyalty to his friends; and I confess that, when I read the above speech for the first time, I felt like giving a fourth cheer for the man that made it.

But Stephens’s speech, though cheered to the echo and much admired, could not stop the mad gait of the South. South Carolina passed her Ordinance of Secession Dec. 20, 1860; and Georgia called her convention to meet Jan. 16, 1861. Stephens thought South Carolina’s action hasty, and her address to the other Southern States flimsy. He especially challenged the statement that the South had been reduced to a helpless minority, and showed how great the South’s share had been in the honors as well as in the labors of government. But his views were not destined to prevail. He went to the convention, and was one of the eighty-nine out of nearly three hundred members who opposed the passage of an ordinance of secession.



When the fatal step was taken, he prepared to stand by his State, as he had always said he should do. It is needless to say that Toombs, who had somewhat prematurely taken leave of the Senate, was found voting for the ordinance. He was then made chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations, and urged the necessity of coming to an understanding with the other seceding States. He was, therefore, unanimously elected a deputy at large from Georgia to the Provisional Congress at Montgomery, to which Stephens also was sent, in spite of his record as a Union man.

It is not necessary, in a course of lectures on *ante bellum* statesmen, to follow the careers of our two Georgians farther, save only to give some sort of unity to this sketch of their lives. We have seen how they represented the two dominant types of Southern character, — how both started out as Unionists and Whigs; how the slavery question drove them finally into the Democratic ranks; how the more dashing and aristocratic of the two gave in at the last to the movement for secession, while the more democratic and conservative held out as long as he could against it; how both agreed that, when the choice between Union and State must be made, the State must have the preference.

In all these respects their course is exceedingly instructive. They represented a commonwealth

which had stronger Union sympathies than any State south of Virginia and Tennessee; they were personally attached to the Union; one of them was probably the ablest constitutional lawyer of his section. They were not men to be led by mere clamor or by force of numbers; yet they were as deluded by the notion that slavery was right and necessary to the South, and that secession was a right incident to a government built on compact, as any cross-roads politician or country editor in South Carolina or Mississippi, — the two strongholds of secession.

When Alexander H. Stephens, after his Union speech of November, 1860, allowed himself to be chosen a delegate to the Montgomery Congress, the calmer heads at the North ought to have known that the movement for Southern independence was something more than a mere rebellion, — that it was a movement based upon ideas and desires, which, if mistaken, were nevertheless the ideas and desires of a people rather than of a sect or party.

Stephens, as we all know, was chosen Vice-President of the new Confederacy, and Toombs, who had been spoken of for President, Secretary of State. The latter soon resigned, not caring to fill an executive position when military commands were to be had, and seemingly not desirous to continue in office under Mr. Davis. He was made a

brigadier-general, and served with some distinction, but was too impatient of discipline to obtain any great success.

Meanwhile, Stephens presided over the ineffectual Confederate Senate, and chafed at the course events were taking. As the power of Davis grew more and more dictatorial, the Vice-President shrunk more and more into his shell; although he did not hesitate to argue openly against the policy of conscription, and to maintain that the forms of constitutional government must be strictly complied with, — a position which was hardly sound under the circumstances, and smacked rather of the theorist than of the practical statesman. It was natural, however, that Stephens should criticise; for he was given little employment, the Hampton Roads Conference being his most important service during the four years of war.

He still stood by his section with his heart, however, if not with his head; and he always believed that if his great scheme of raising money on the cotton crop had been followed out, the Confederacy would have won. His scheme looks well on paper, but it is permissible to doubt whether it would have been thoroughly successful in practice. Whenever he could get a chance he retired from Richmond, which had been transformed from a quiet town to a dissipated and reckless capital, and returned to his far-famed

Liberty Hall, where he could lead a simple bachelor life.

Never was an estate or house better named. Nobody ever thought of needing an invitation; and nearly every train brought some visitor, who was attended to by the servants, and unconcernedly put in an appearance at the next meal. If Stephens were busy, he would leave his uninvited guests to amuse themselves, and come and go as they would. Every white man in Taliaferro County considered himself a specially privileged visitor at the Hall, and not a few thought that they had a right to draw on their host for groceries and other necessities at the village store.

Under all these circumstances it is a wonder that the head of this Abbey of Misrule made both ends meet; but he did, or rather his faithful servants, who, by the way, kept the house going in the same style during his frequent absences, did it for him. It was at this last stronghold of Jeffersonian democracy of the old type and of strict State's rights that the veteran statesman was arrested on the 11th of May, 1865. He was conveyed to Fort Warren in Boston Harbor, where he was treated kindly, until he was released on parole, Oct. 12 of the same year. Toombs, meanwhile, had escaped to Europe, after adventures that would fit better into a sensational novel than into a sober lecture like this.

The war was now over; and the great question before the Southern people was, what should they do, or, rather, what would they be allowed to do, toward reconstructing society and local governments. There was obvious need either of new men, or of old men who had accommodated themselves to the new order of things. Naturally it was hard to find leaders who would fit into either of these categories; but Mr. Stephens fell easily into the latter. It would have been well if every Southern State had possessed at least one statesman like him. He was elected to the United States Senate, but was not allowed to take his seat; and in April, 1866, he testified boldly but fairly before the Reconstruction Committee at Washington.

Then he undertook, at the suggestion of a Philadelphia publisher, to write a history of the war, which occupied him off and on for nearly four years, being completed by April, 1870. It is unquestionably the ablest exposition and defence of the Southern cause that has yet been made by any participant in the stirring events it describes, and it is written in an admirable temper. It is deficient just where Mr. Stephens's own statesmanship was deficient, — it argues constitutional questions from the point of view of the lawyer rather than from that of the historian, a procedure not without precedent in the North. It endeavors to fit a gov-

ernment to a theory, and it treats as rigid and stationary elements of a people's life that are peculiarly subject to evolution and growth. It is a book that will be read with respect, in spite of its dialogue form, by every serious student of American history; and it will always be a monument to its author's fine qualities of heart and head.

Toombs meanwhile had returned from abroad, and, unreconstructed as he was, had taken his place as a leader in the State. He could fill no national offices; but he could still practise with the same success as of old, and could almost dictate the policy of the State. He and Stephens failed to keep Georgia from voting for Greeley; but they fairly dominated the Democrats, although Stephens was defeated for senator by General John B. Gordon. In compensation he was immediately after elected to Congress, where he served for nearly ten years with great distinction, resigning in 1882 to become governor of the State, in which position he died the following year.

Toombs lived until Dec. 15, 1885, just long enough to be able to sing his *nunc dimittis* over the election of a Democrat in the person of Grover Cleveland. When he died, one of the most picturesque figures of the Civil War was taken away from the eyes of the new generation. He had had his faults, some of them of a personal nature which

I have not thought it necessary to dwell upon ; but he had had his compensating virtues, and with his friend Stephens he had made his mark upon his State and period. Time has already done much to obliterate the mark they made, but the period in which they flourished will always attract the attention of the historian ; and he will fail to understand it thoroughly unless he knows, not merely what manner of men Alexander H. Stephens and Robert Toombs were, but also, in the main, what they wrote and said and did. He will frequently have to fault them, but it will oftener be his privilege to approve. For, though swept away at the last, they honestly loved and clung to the Union through their youth and early manhood, and resisted demagogues like Polk and Rhett manfully, if unsuccessfully.

They were not sealed of the Tribe of Washington ; but alas ! who has been ? They could not apply Jefferson's dialectic ; for he, poor philosopher, has had Hegel's fate, and has left disciples of the Right, Centre, and Left, each of whom is sure that he alone has the master's secret, whereas the master would probably be willing to exclaim with the great German that only one man understood him, James Madison, but that Clay and Calhoun killed him. They could not even make deft use of Clay's cement or of Calhoun's acid-solvent, but they did act truly and manfully according to the

lights they had. In the words of the poet they were

“*Arcades ambo,  
Et cantare pares et respondere parati ;*”

and the song they sung was one of loyal devotion to what they deemed to be the best interests of their State and section.

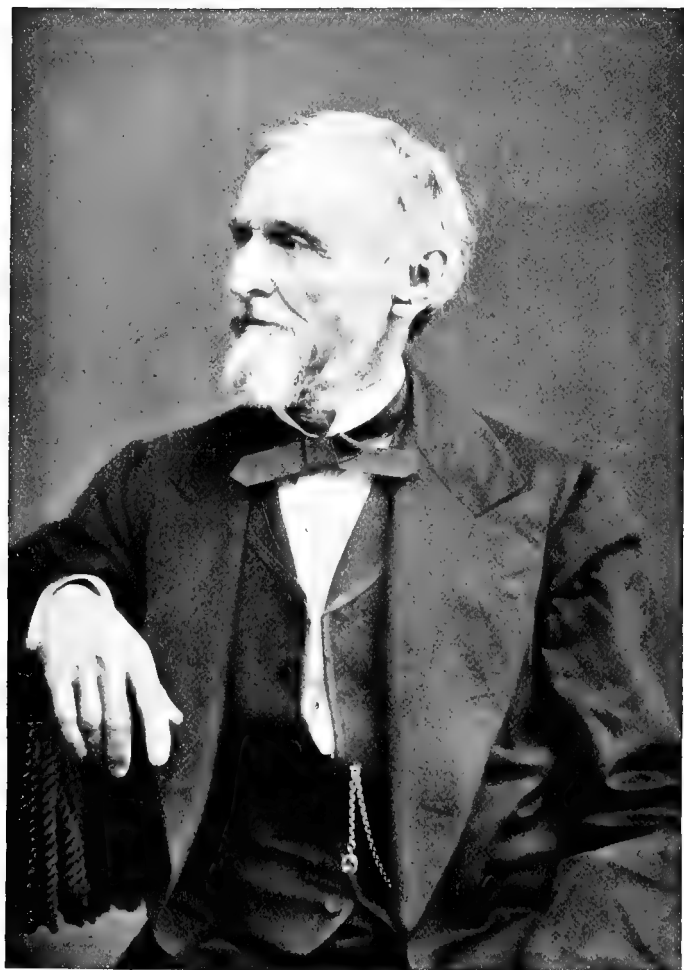




JEFFERSON DAVIS.







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## JEFFERSON DAVIS.<sup>1</sup>

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THE old proverb, *facilis est descensus Averni*, is hardly applicable to the downward slope these lectures describe, when the greatness of their respective subjects is taken into consideration. That, leaving the last lecture out of account, there is a constant slope downward is certain; and there are probably a good many people whose estimate of Mr. Davis's character will lead them to believe that the phrase *descensus Averni* is particularly apt and appropriate.

<sup>1</sup> I have relied on Mrs. Davis's too voluminous but valuable life of her husband; on Mr. Davis's own writings, especially on his well-written "Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government;" on the lives by Alfuend and Pollard, the latter of whom, though a Southerner, was a most prejudiced critic; on Nicolay and Hay's monumental life of Lincoln; on Craven's interesting account of Mr. Davis's prison-life; and on other sources too numerous to mention. I have made no reference to Mr. Davis's own defence of his actions, because his point of view is so different from my own that the simplest thing to do is to refer the reader to the originals at once. Although not as able an expounder of the typical Southern views as Mr. Stephens, Mr. Davis is always clear and readable, and is scrupulously honest, if constitutionally narrow and one-sided. His brief autobiographical sketch of himself in *Belford's Magazine* for January, 1890, is worth reading for its modesty of statement, if for no other reason.

But it is the adjective *facilis* at which I chiefly stumble; for I have found the descent from Washington to Davis increasingly difficult, instead of easier by degrees, until I have fairly begun this last lecture with a feeling of exhaustion and despair of success—at least of the kind of success I have aimed at in these lectures. I have endeavored to tell you in a broad and general way what sort of men in my opinion Washington and Jefferson and Randolph and Calhoun and Stephens and Toombs were, what they have stood for in our history, how they are to be ranked as statesmen, and finally why and how far we should honor and respect their memories.

The task has not been easy, but I trust that I have at least partially succeeded. Now, to do all this with regard to Jefferson Davis is especially difficult; because there is a great prejudice against him at the North and among portions of the Southern people, and because this prejudice and the nearness of his times to ours have vitiated much of the material relative to his career that has been hitherto gathered, and prevented the gathering of much more.

Mr. Davis has been made the object of so much unstinted abuse and so much uncritical praise, that it is exceedingly difficult to analyze his character and career with the freedom from bias, the candor, the sympathy, that are necessary to the

historian and the biographer. Then, again, there is such a lack of material with regard to the four most critical years of his life that one is continually in the dark when trying to estimate his general executive ability, or his responsibility for some particular measure.

This absence of materials for the complete understanding of the civil administration of the Southern Confederacy may some day cease to embarrass the student, for there are probably in existence many important documents that will slowly come to light. The prejudice, too, that is connected with Mr. Davis's name will also gradually disappear, and fifty or a hundred years from now some lecturer may address the good people of Madison on the subject of the President of the Southern Confederacy with a confidence and assurance that the present lecturer is far from feeling. Stranger things happen than the waning of prejudice and popular hatred. Mr. Davis, when he camped near this very spot in the summer of 1829, little thought that nearly seventy years later he would here be made the subject of a lecture by a Southerner who cannot recollect ever seeing a slave, and who has never believed in the doctrine of States' rights *per se*.

But the difficulty of rightly estimating Mr. Davis's character and career depends on more



causes than those I have already mentioned. His character was a very mixed one, and his career a very varied one; his personality, too, chiefly emerged in a period of storm and stress when lurid flames of passion lighted up and distorted every figure that rose above the confused and indistinguishable masses. He lived and moved in a society which we of this generation know only by report; his ideals are not ours at all, or ours only by a sort of sentimental inheritance. By his position he has come, rightly or wrongly, to be regarded as the representative of a cause, hence it is all the more difficult to judge him as a man. His fate in this respect has been curiously unlike that of his great contemporary, General Robert E. Lee. Lee, as a man and a soldier, is constantly receiving tributes of praise and admiration from men who have no sympathy for the cause for which he exerted his genius. A man can praise Lee in the North and West without great risk of having his political opinions suspected and condemned. I imagine that such would not be the case with the man who should venture to praise Jefferson Davis.

But unless the student of history can distribute his praise and blame impartially and without fear of consequences, his liability to errors of judgment, always great, will be overwhelming and inevitable. I know whereof I speak; for much of

the work I have been called upon to do in an historical way has been done with the full consciousness that unless I reached certain conclusions it would be unacceptable to a majority of the people with whom my lot is cast, and to whom I am united by ties of friendship and love. This consciousness has hampered me; and while I trust that it has never kept me from giving utterance to what I have believed to be the truth, I feel sure that it has sometimes led me into unbalanced and exaggerated expressions of opinion which I have afterwards regretted. With regard to the very subject of my lecture to-night, I feel that if I sway the balance one way, I may please those who hear me, and displease those Southern audiences who may listen to me hereafter; and that if I sway it another way, I shall run the risk of displeasing you, and more or less please them. But this feeling is not conducive to calm impartiality. Nevertheless, I shall say just what I think, and leave you to praise or blame as you deem proper. And first I am going to give you, in a few words, a general estimate of Mr. Davis as a man and statesman, then I am going to consider his career in some detail.

I do not consider Mr. Davis a thoroughly great man; and I should not do so if he had been President of the United States instead of Lincoln, and had brought the war to a successful close. I con-

sider him an able and versatile man, a fairly typical representative of his people and their cause, a good man with thoroughly pure intentions, a gentleman and a wonderfully gallant soldier, a wofully misunderstood and oftentimes slandered and ill-treated man, and, finally, a statesman who, though he made many grave errors, was a failure not so much through his own lack of ability to govern, as through the inherent weakness of the cause he represented.

Of Jeff Davis the rebel and traitor, whom a popular song devoted to an uncomfortable situation on a particular sort of apple-tree, this lecture will take little account. Of Jefferson Davis our Martyr-President, Representative of the Lost Cause, true Knight-errant of Southern Chivalry, our peerless Statesman, Defender of the Southland, *et cetera*, this lecture will take equally little account. But of Jefferson Davis the fate-devoted protagonist of the greatest of modern tragedies, the man driven by the madness of the gods to turn upon the nation for whom he had bled at Buena Vista the bayonets and swords of a section that had once battled for her liberation, the man who, with a worse doom than that of *Œdipus*, was forced to lead his own people, whom he loved, into the valley of the shadow of death, — of this man, worthy in many ways of your regard, and still more of your sympathy and true pity that does not insult,

this lecture will, I trust, give a fair, though necessarily not final account.

Now, this is plainly not the Jeff Davis of Northern imagination, nor is it the Mr. Davis of Southern affection and fancy; but it is nearer the Southern view than the Northern. This is natural, for the Southern people have all along been in a better position to understand the man and his motives. The Northern people have been compelled to judge him largely by his actions, the character and effect of which they could gauge better than they could the motives that underlay them. The Southern people, on the contrary, have understood Mr. Davis's motives, and judged him by them, while they have, as a rule, been unable to comprehend the real nature of his actions. But, in judging a man's character, motives are more important than actions; and, as I incline to accept the Southern estimate of Mr. Davis's motives, my view of him as a man will be found to approximate somewhat to that taken by a majority of the people of my section.

In determining his rank and character as a statesman, however, I must perforce consider his actions and their results; and here I am compelled to part company with Southern opinion, and to range myself with the more moderate Northern historians. His political career throughout, so far as it relates to the Union, must, I think, meet with

emphatic disapprobation from the calm student of history; it does not meet with reprobation at my hands, because I think that his motives were those of an honest though mistaken man, and because I think that his career was determined by circumstances over which he had little or no control.

A thoroughly great man, however, will manage in some way partly to control circumstances, or at least will know that he is being controlled by them. In neither of these respects does Mr. Davis show signs of possessing thorough greatness, either of mind or soul, as I shall try to show in my sketch of his career. I think he does give evidence of possessing every other quality I have claimed for him,—ability, bravery, honesty; and as a man possessing these qualities, no matter how unfortunate and disastrous, whether to himself or others, his career may have proved, we can none of us afford to fling the first or the millionth stone.

Jefferson Davis was born June 3, 1808, in Christian, now Todd County, Ky., the chief strains in his blood being Welsh and Scotch-Irish. His family removed during his infancy to Mississippi, and with that State his fame has always been connected. He received a gentle rearing; although his schooling was at first limited, owing to the conditions of the country. When he was seven

years old he spent several weeks at the Hermitage, and was much impressed by the character of Andrew Jackson; but whether he imbibed any of his notorious obstinacy from his host is hard to say. After a couple of years spent at a Roman Catholic school in Kentucky, and a short period passed at a so-called college in Mississippi, he entered Transylvania University at Lexington, Ky., an institution that seems to have done good work for those times. Here he got the elements of a classical education; but before graduation he was transferred to West Point, where he made friends with Albert Sidney Johnston and Leonidas Polk, whose lives were to be given to the Confederacy, of which he was to be the ill-starred executive.

He graduated rather low in his class, but gave evidence of soldierly qualities, and won the regard of his classmates. His first year of duty was spent at Fort Crawford, now Prairie du Chien, in this State.<sup>1</sup> Then he served at Fort Winnebago, on the Yellow River, at the Galena Lead Mines, at Fort Crawford again, giving evidence of capacity to command, to perform arduous duties successfully, and to win confidence and affection.

He was in the Black Hawk War, and is said to have had a *rencontre* with Abraham Lincoln, which was prosaic enough then, but is picturesque now; though more recent investigations throw grave

<sup>1</sup> i.e. Wisconsin.

doubts on its actual occurrence. Then, after some reconnoitring in the North-west, and other service, he fell sick, and resigned the army.

He had previously won the love of a daughter of Zachary Taylor, but his marriage had been postponed on account of a silly misunderstanding with his proposed father-in-law. The marriage was now consummated without Taylor's consent, but not by elopement, as used to be currently believed. The young wife died, however, in a few months under very sad circumstances, and Davis sought restoration for his shattered health in Cuba. Thence he went for a short period to Washington, where he began his friendship with Franklin Pierce. Returning to Mississippi, he commenced planting with his elder brother Joseph, and for eight years lived almost the life of a hermit.

This period, 1837-1845, was very important in a formative way, and deserves special attention. The young lieutenant had learned much of people and practical affairs during his service in the North-west, and had developed many admirable traits of character; but he had had little time to devote to politics, except when, in the nullification squabble, he had made up his mind that he would not use his sword to coerce a sovereign State, even at the bidding of his hero, Andrew Jackson.

His States'-rights proclivities were thus marked early in his career; they were destined to become in-

grained during his period of seclusion. His brother Joseph was a typical Southern planter, accustomed to rule those around him, and with a strong enough personality to be able to rule without undue violence. The patriarchal form of life in the South tended to invest an elder brother with more authority than would be natural in a pure democracy, and Jefferson Davis's military training accustomed him to look up to his seniors. There can be slight doubt, I think, that Joseph Davis had not a little to do with confirming Jefferson Davis's mind in the principles of States' rights in their most ultra form. The most often used books in the library of Joseph Davis were the "Federalist" and "Elliot's Debates." These the two brothers used to study diligently; and they knew the Constitution and the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions almost by heart. They would argue all questions of current politics in the light of these documents, which were as little to be questioned as the Gospel itself.

To quote Mrs. Davis: —

"The brothers considered the Constitution a sacred compact, by which a number of sovereigns agreed to hold their possessions in common under strict limitations; and that, as in any other partnership or business agreement, it was not to be tampered with or evaded without the sacrifice of honor and good faith."

It would be easy to show that, down to his



death in 1889, Jefferson Davis never varied a hair's breadth from this view of the nature of the government under which he filled so many important positions, and against which he fought with such bitter persistency. He never, for one moment, rose above this view of government as a matter of bargain and compact; and his mind was not so constituted as to allow him to believe that any one could differ with him in so plain a point without being either dishonest or fanatical.

Poor man, it never once occurred to him that he was a fanatic worshipping a fetich. But in this he was no worse off than thousands of his fellow-citizens; he was only able to express his views more fluently and consistently than they could. And the cause of his taking this limited view of the functions of government was the same cause that had made Calhoun take it, — the fact that slavery had kept the South from advancing to the conception of our national existence.

Calhoun and Davis and the South practically made themselves believe that they were living under the old Confederacy of 1781. That Confederacy had suited a large number of Southerners before the Union of 1789 was formed, and it suited them afterwards. When the Union did not suit them in 1798 and 1799, Jefferson and perhaps Madison practically went back to the Confederate idea; and so did the New England

Federalists when the War of 1812 was thrust upon them.

Particularistic notions of government had been dominant in America for nearly two centuries when the Constitution was framed; and it was impossible to root them out, as the Founders recognized when they made that instrument a compromise between particularistic and centralistic ideas. But a compromise instrument lends itself to be read in two different lights, and such has been the fate of the Constitution.

The North, soon united by trade, commerce, canals, and railways, came more and more to view it in the light of centralistic ideas. The South, kept by slavery in a primitive condition, and therefore conservative, never advanced beyond a particularistic interpretation. The only principle of union in the South was slavery, just as the only principle of union in the whole country in 1776 was opposition to Great Britain. United by slavery, the Southern politicians made an aggressive fight, and tried to carry slavery into the Territories; but, even if this united action had been successful, it would not have meant the triumph of centralistic principles, any more than the success of the American Revolution meant such a triumph.

If any one need proof of the truth of this statement, let him study carefully the provisions of the

Constitution subsequently adopted by the Confederate States. Professor Woodrow Wilson was right, therefore, when in his admirable little book, "Division and Reunion," he maintained that the South had stood still constitutionally. His critics objected that the pro-slavery aggressions of 1850-1860 showed that the South had not stood still; but the critics failed to see that these aggressions did not at all indicate any advance in political principles — they were desperate measures of political expediency, or rather in expediency.

The South having stood still in her particularistic notions of States' rights, and in her primitive notions as to the morality of slavery, it would have been almost a miracle if a Mississippi planter had formed any other political ideas than those which Mr. Davis formulated during his period of retirement. He had an inquiring and alert mind, and was in all respects an able man; but he did not have an original mind, and as a man never reached any higher degree of greatness than that vouchsafed to honest talents.

It takes genius, however, to overleap the barriers to thought set by heredity and environment. And even if Davis had had originality, the isolation and narrowness of his plantation life at this formative period would in all probability have made him eccentric instead of great. Certainly the peculiar conditions of *ante-bellum* Southern

life gave that section, after the Revolution, no political thinkers, save, perhaps, Calhoun, who turned back on himself in the middle of his career; no philosophers, no poets, or men of letters, save Poe, who have taken even a secondary position in the world of thought. I do not believe that it was possible for Davis to have reasoned on the nature of government like a philosopher, and to have seen the absurdity of his partnership interpretation of the Constitution, or on the nature of slavery like a moralist, and to have seen that it was essentially wrong.

Messrs. Nicolay and Hay, in their valuable "Life of Lincoln," present a curious parallel between the careers of Lincoln and Davis, and reach the conclusion that if Lincoln had gone south from Kentucky and Davis north, Lincoln would never have adopted Davis's views as to the Constitution and slavery, nor would Davis have attained to the breadth of Lincoln's views.

I grant freely that Davis never could have been a Lincoln, because he was not a man of genius; but I am not at all sure that he might not have become an ardent Union man and an opponent of slavery. In fact, he might have become a fanatical abolitionist, and been shot. Nor am I at all sure that Lincoln, in the South, would have got clear of the meshes of slavery; I am afraid his genius, which had a slightly morbid and eccentric

streak about it, would have developed these traits to such an extent as to have prevented him from performing any great service to mankind.

If this be heresy, I suppose I must suffer the penalty, whatever that may be; but at least I must insist that whatever allowance be made to Messrs. Nicolay and Hay in their historical speculations, none can be made for their historical judgments as to the true character of Mr. Davis when they are couched in the following style:—

“As a blind man may not be held responsible for his description of a painting, or a deaf-mute be expected to repeat accurately the airs of an opera, so we can only explain Jefferson Davis’s vehement denial of the charge of hypocrisy and conspiracy through a whole decade, by the supposition that he was incapable of understanding the accepted meaning of such words as ‘patriotism,’ ‘loyalty,’ ‘allegiance,’ ‘faith,’ ‘honor,’ and ‘duty.’”<sup>1</sup>

For my own part, I can explain the insertion of this remarkable sentence only on the supposition that the gentlemen who penned it were incapable of understanding the accepted meaning of the noble words they strung together — by which statement I do not mean for a moment to imply that they are not patriotic, loyal, honorable, and dutiful; but only that they seem not to understand that patriotism, loyalty, honor, *et cetera*, require objects if they are not to remain mere

<sup>1</sup> Nicolay and Hay, III., 210.

abstractions, and that such objects differ in different times and places.

It was the accepted notion of honor, duty, and allegiance among the members of a German *commitatus* to die on the field of battle with their chief; it is not the accepted notion of honor, duty, and allegiance among the privates of a regiment to die on the field of battle with their colonel. The patriotism, loyalty, *et cetera*, acceptable to Messrs. Nicolay and Hay — and I must add to myself — are patriotism and loyalty toward the United States of America; the patriotism and loyalty acceptable to Mr. Davis and to thousands of other true and brave men were patriotism and loyalty to the State of Mississippi.

But just as it would be preposterous for a warrior of the Allemanni, if one could revisit the glimpses of the moon, to reproach a modern soldier of either army because he managed to emerge unscathed from the carnage at Gettysburg while his commanding officer was killed, so it is preposterous for Messrs. Nicolay and Hay to urge that Jefferson Davis did not know what patriotism and loyalty meant because forsooth he was patriotic and loyal in a way different from their own. Until we learn that men can differ radically on the most sacred subjects, — on religion, morality, allegiance, duty, — and still be honest and true as far as their lights go, we are in great

danger of becoming bigots in religion, partisans in politics, and one-sided theorists and critics in philosophy, literature, and history.

I have dwelt on this matter, and have taken Lincoln's biographers to task, simply because I believe that it will be impossible to arrive at any true conclusions with regard to the history of this country prior to 1865, unless we give up our present method of impugning the motives of the actors in that great drama, the *motif* of which was the downfall of slavery. Until it is possible for one and the same man to render justice both to William Lloyd Garrison and to Jefferson Davis within the covers of one volume, we shall not have an impartial historian or an impartial history. Let our historian characterize actions *per se* as they deserve to be characterized, but let him hesitate to assume that a fatal and disastrous action presupposes a wicked motive behind it. The chief trouble with American historians up to the present time has been that they have not studied general history widely and deeply enough, and that they have had little knowledge of men. But it is time we returned to the man Jefferson Davis.

In 1845 Mr. Davis emerged from his retirement, and was nominated for Congress. He had seemingly done nothing to entitle him to political distinction, but the number of available men in the

sparsely populated State was doubtless small. Sam Houston afterwards remarked of him that he was as ambitious as Lucifer and as cold as a lizard, — qualities that would seem to neutralize one another so far as political success is concerned. Edward A. Pollard, his bitter critic, afterwards charged him with eccentricity and capriciousness in having suddenly abandoned private life for politics without any ostensible reason, and further claimed that most of his political blunders came from the fact that he was by nature fitted to be a hermit and a student rather than a leader of men. How far these charges are true cannot be yet determined; but it is at least certain that he was bold enough in his canvass to denounce repudiation in a pamphlet which he had printed by a Whig opponent, and which he presented in person to Mr. Briscoe, the leader of the repudiators, and a political power in the State. His audacity and honesty secured him Briscoe's vote, and perhaps his election, but did not save him afterwards from the slanderous charge of having favored repudiation.<sup>1</sup>

In Congress he seems to have done little except to claim that the annexation of Texas was a great national measure, and to eulogize the loyalty of Mississippi in strains of rather perfervid rhetoric.

<sup>1</sup> A charge still repeated, but on absolutely no grounds so far as I can see.



He thus started out as a Southern extremist, and a States'-rights man of the deepest dye; but his ready flow of stately words, and his evenly balanced sentences, combined with his academic manner, not merely impressed old John Quincy Adams, but also showed that he would prove an orator of the senatorial type, and that he would hardly be in his element in the more rough and ready House.

Indeed, Davis, even in the most exciting scenes of his congressional career, never could forget that he was a gentleman, and that it did not become him to use coarse language, thus setting an example which it would have been well if some of his Mississippi colleagues had followed. It is probably true also, as his critics have alleged, that he never could forget that John C. Calhoun was a States'-rights leader whom it would be well for him to imitate, in order that he might be close under the prophet's mantle when it fell; but I can see nothing in this ambition to Davis's discredit; and it is certain that he ventured to stand out against Calhoun on the matter of national expenditures on the Mississippi River,—a proceeding which, if it smacks of the fanaticism of ultra States' rights, surely does not smack of servility.

But the young congressman had little time to sit at the feet of his chosen Gamaliel; for in the summer of 1846 he was elected colonel of the

First Mississippi Regiment, and was needed on the field. His old soldierly instincts got the better of his new political ones; and his devotion to Mississippi prevailed over his respect for the Union, since he refused the chance of becoming a brigadier-general by appointment of the President.

He hastened to Mexico, and distinguished himself at the storming of Monterey and at the battle of Buena Vista; his famous formation of the re-entering angle at the latter engagement being one of the most gallant incidents in the whole range of our military history. He retired from the war with a severe wound, with the love of his soldiers, and with a reputation for personal valor second to that of no man in the country. The hero of Buena Vista, the Dictator of the Southern Confederacy, the political prisoner of Fortress Monroe, are figures that are with difficulty blent into one; but a great dramatic poet might accomplish the task, and if he did, it would give us one of the most moving tragedies in the world's literature.

The people of Mississippi, without possessing the dramatic instinct or the gift of foresight, did possess the spirit of appreciation and gratitude, and were rejoiced when their governor, in 1847, appointed Colonel Davis to fill a vacancy in the Senate of the United States. Thither the cripple betook himself on his two crutches, and began his

new career by defending against Webster the war in which he had received his wound. He was more profitably employed perhaps when he engaged in organizing the Smithsonian Institution. Certainly he was but adding fuel to the flames when he joined Calhoun in an attack on one of John P. Hale's abolition petitions; and his resolution with regard to the non-prohibition of slavery in Oregon showed that he would be second to no man in leading the South and its peculiar institution on to destruction. It is due to him to say that he led the way as bravely as he had led his Mississippians at Buena Vista; but his sword was keener and more forcible than his eloquence, and the Mexicans were more vulnerable than Fate. He had the good sense, however, to decline the leadership of a filibustering expedition to Cuba.

We must pass rapidly over his short first service in the Senate, noting only his proneness to express his ultra pro-slavery views at all times and seasons, and his almost, if not quite, absurd constitutional scruples against the purchase of the manuscript of Washington's "Farewell Address." He listened with reverence, however, to the more dismal one of the dying Calhoun; then, as if in obedience to the dictates of that Moses who was never to see the Promised Land of a Union based on States' rights, he resigned his seat in the Sen-

ate, in order to lead the forlorn hopes of his party as candidate for the governorship of Mississippi.

General John A. Quitman had been nominated; but, though personally popular, his bold advocacy of the genuine Simon-pure Calhoun principle of nullification had evidently made his canvass hopeless, even in the State which had called the Nashville Convention. Davis of Buena Vista fame might win against Foote, and so vindicate his opposition to the latter's resolutions; and he was not the man to retain a snug berth when his party and his principles demanded a sacrifice. He was not a nullifier, nor had he been implicated in Cuban affairs as Quitman was accused of being, so he had a fighting chance.

He made a vigorous campaign, though suffering greatly from acute ophthalmia, and, if he failed of election, reduced the majority against his party from seven thousand to one. His conduct in resigning from the Senate has been called quixotic by his critics; and it has been intimated that he was playing a conspicuous part in order to win notoriety, and advance himself to leadership in the South, if not to the presidency of the Union. Such charges are of course easily made and not easily refuted, but they will hardly be believed by any student of his life who has psychological insight.

Mr. Davis was too near akin to the fanatic to

have much in common with the charlatan or the actor; and genuine Don Quixotes are possible only when an institution or a custom has been exploded for even the masses of mankind. It was to take fifteen years to explode the pretensions of States' rights and slavery, not merely for the South, but for a large number of sensible and honest people at the North.

The elections of 1850 showed that the majority of the Southern people were not prepared to follow their extreme pro-slavery leaders to the point of disunion, and Davis was shrewd enough to take the lesson to heart while attending to his plantation duties at home. He felt, too, that although any compromise on the matter of the rights of slave-owners to carry their property into the Territories was both dangerous to the slave interests, and not warranted by the Constitution, it would be unwise to disturb the existing truce, and jeopardize the Union.

He had not reached the point of despair with regard to slavery, and of disgust with regard to the Union, that such extremists as Beverley Tucker had reached in 1820, and to which such shallow fanatics as the pro-slavery leaders in South Carolina and Mississippi were giving loud-mouthed utterance at this very juncture. But he was hedging in order to gain the presidency, whisper his critics; and again I take occasion to differ. I

grant that he probably had his eyes on the presidency, and that he consulted his political interest before committing himself to any important step; but I find no reason to accuse him of deliberate sacrifice of principle, and I think that his desire to preserve the Union, if he could keep it and slavery too, was genuine. It is well to note further, that, even when he became a determined disunionist, he was not a blatant one.

But he was not to be left to watch the course of events from a distance. His political and other studies, which were wide and varied, had to be left behind for a seat in the Cabinet of his friend Franklin Pierce. The Secretaryship of War would just suit Davis of Buena Vista thought the President, and he would take no refusal. It would have been far better for Pierce's reputation if he had taken Davis at his word, and left him to read history and plant cotton; it might have been better for Davis too, though it is doubtful whether he would have remained in retirement long. When he did enter Pierce's Cabinet, he became the latter's evil genius, without the least sinister motives. He was largely responsible for the President's course in the Kansas troubles, and he probably cannot be acquitted of having disposed of the troops and resources of his own department in a spirit of partiality not entirely creditable to a cabinet officer.

But impartiality was never Davis's forte, and where slavery was concerned he was always preternaturally squint-eyed. His sympathy with the Border Ruffians was as natural as his horror at the John Brown Raid. If Sumner had assaulted Brooks he would have been outraged, but when Brooks assaulted Sumner it was another matter. Yet I venture to assert that ninety-nine Americans out of a hundred are going in this presidential year to be guilty of partisanship just as indiscriminating as that of Davis, only perhaps less dangerous in its consequences.

With regard to the truth of the charge that Davis was using his seat in the Cabinet to arm the South for the intended rebellion I am disposed to be dubious. That he was counselled to do it is obvious, but it is equally obvious that in certain important recommendations he was scrupulously fair. Besides, according to his critics, he still hankered after the presidency; and he would hardly have been pursuing two such dissimilar lines of thought and action at the same time, for his nature, though not simple, was not tortuous. It is at least certain that he made a very efficient secretary, and that his recommendations for a railway to the Pacific, and for the use of improved arms, showed his superiority to the average routine official.

Davis passed immediately from the Cabinet to

the Senate, and in the latter body took, as far as any one could, the post of leadership left empty by the death of Calhoun. There were more violent pro-slavery advocates than himself, but none more thoroughly determined; and the very fact that he did not fly the track like such men as Hammond of South Carolina gave him additional strength. Bodily strength he did not have throughout the exciting period that the country was entering upon, but his strength of will was prodigious. He pushed forward the slavery outposts to a point that Calhoun himself had not ventured to claim, actually maintaining that not merely did Congress have no right to prohibit a Southerner from taking his slaves into a Territory, but that it was under the positive obligation to pass laws securing him in the possession of his human property after he had entered the Territory.

This extravagant claim could have been made by no one not a doctrinaire and a fanatic; for the passage of such legislation by Congress would have been equivalent to the proclamation that every State subsequently added to the Union must be a slave State, since it would have been practically impossible to get rid of the slaves and the laws keeping them in slavery without a resort to force which Congress could not have permitted. Indeed, the more one studies the claims of the South to admission for their slaves into the Ter-



ritories, the more one is struck by the utter lack of practical sense displayed by the pro-slavery leaders.

Not only was the policy sure to drive the North to desperate resistance, but it involved elements of self-stultification from every point of view. The very basal principle on which the gossamer arguments were reared, — the idea that as the Northern man could carry his property into the Territories, a Southern man ought to be able to carry his, — ignored the important fact that in every slave-code in the South slaves were set apart and distinguished from ordinary property in many respects. Yet the theory of Calhoun and Davis depends on the merging of human and other property, and falls if they are distinguished; for the power of Congress over the introduction of persons into a State or Territory must exist, or the slave-trade could not have been abolished, and no check could be put on immigration.

But it is idle to waste time pricking theories that have already been pierced by the sword, nor is it worth while to compare the pacific and comparatively loyal speech that Davis made at Portland, Me., in the summer of 1858, with his utterances the following summer in Mississippi, when he proclaimed that the election of a Republican President would be sufficient cause for the South to go out of the Union. It is idle, too, in the space at my

command, to comment on the folly, from a pro-slavery point of view, of splitting the Democratic party, or of withdrawing from the Union, when the Republicans did not have a majority in Congress, and had repeatedly avowed their intention of not interfering with slavery in the States.

Alexander H. Stephens, in his famous Union speech of November, 1860, saw this folly just as clearly as Northern historians have seen it since ; but he was only a little less mad than the rest of his compatriots. Davis, too, was a little less mad than the gentlemen who were willing to drink all the blood that would be shed if the South seceded, for he knew and proclaimed that there would be war. But he and Stephens were equally mad when it came to the question of whether a government could be built on slavery as a foundation, and both mounted to nightmare chairs of state.

The conduct of Davis in remaining in Washington as a senator, and conducting correspondence with the leaders of the disunion party in the South relative to the seizure of forts, *et cetera*, has, of course, been subjected to grave censure, but is thoroughly consistent with his openly expressed views as to the nature of his office.

He was Mississippi's ambassador in a Senate of sovereign States ; it was his duty to remain at his post until his State recalled him by seceding ; and he was at liberty to aid his State by giving advice

and gathering information, just as an ambassador at a foreign court would be before his recall at the outbreak of a war. How he would have applied this doctrine to the conduct of Floyd, Thompson, and Cobb, who remained in Buchanan's Cabinet in order to help wreck the administration, is a point hardly worth dwelling on — the end justifying the means to most fanatics.

For my own part, I have little hesitation in affirming that when Jefferson Davis took his leave of the Senate, he did it with the thorough approval of his conscience, and with a real sadness of heart. He showed none of the blatant elation that characterized many of the shallower spirits who imitated him; but alas! he took a step which, while deserving our sympathy rather than our hate and scorn, certainly blasted his career. He was a brave man and a true man, whom the gods, wishing to destroy, had first made mad — the mistakes of fathers, as well as their sins, being visited on their children.

The Southern Confederacy having been formed when enough States had seceded, Mr. Davis was naturally chosen President, because his course had been perfectly consistent throughout, and because he was regarded as a safer man than such outspoken and hot-brained leaders as Rhett and Toombs. His courage, too, had been tried on the battlefield, and his wisdom, from a Southern and

pro-slavery point of view, in the council chamber. A government founded on abstract principles of politics and morals, such as equal partnership in sovereignty and the inherent virtue and blessedness of slavery, would be fitly presided over by a doctrinaire.

Jefferson Davis represented the more militant portion of the Southern people and their cause only too well, as many persons discovered after he had been a few months in office. They ought to have discovered the fact from the following sentences in his first Inaugural (Montgomery, Feb. 18, 1861): —

“ Our industrial pursuits have received no check; the cultivation of our fields has progressed as heretofore; and even should we be involved in war, there would be no considerable diminution in the production of the staples which have constituted our exports, and in which the commercial world has an interest scarcely less than our own. This common interest of the producer and consumer can only be interrupted by an exterior force, which should obstruct its transmission to foreign markets — a course of conduct which would be as unjust toward us as it would be detrimental to manufacturing and commercial interests abroad. Should reason guide the action of the government from which we have separated, a policy so detrimental to the civilized world, the Northern States included, could not be dictated by even the strongest desire to inflict injury upon us; but if otherwise, a terrible responsibility will rest upon it, and the suffering of millions will bear testimony to the folly and wickedness of our aggressors. In the

meantime, there will remain to us, besides the ordinary means before suggested, the well-known resources for retaliation upon the commerce of an enemy."

The idea of a government which was about to go to war (for Davis believed this) calmly reasoning on the subject, and avoiding a policy of inflicting distress upon the enemy because it might thereby involve the commerce of the rest of the world in trouble, and so incur the imputation of folly and wickedness, would strike us as simply amusing if we came across it in turning over the pages of Dean Swift; but to find it in the Inaugural Speech of the President of a new-fledged Republic that must fight for her liberties is hardly occasion for anything short of tears. Yet Mr. Davis rarely wrote a document without some passage as weak and chimerical as this: witness the prediction in his second Inaugural,—that the North must soon sink under the load of debt it had incurred.

But he was not alone in his madness; for about a month later (March 21, 1861), in a speech at Savannah, Mr. Alexander H. Stephens, after referring to the fact that Jefferson and Washington had believed slavery to be an evil, asserted boldly that the ideas of that day were fundamentally wrong, and continued as follows:—

"They [the ideas] rested upon an assumption of the equality of races. This was an error. It was a sandy foun-

dation; and the idea of a government built upon it — when the storm came and the wind blew, it fell.

“Our new government is founded upon exactly the opposite ideas; its foundations are laid, its cornerstone rests upon the great truth that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery, subordination to the superior race, is his natural and normal condition. This, our new government, is the first in the history of the world based upon this great physical, philosophical, and moral truth.”

The speaker then went on to observe complacently that this truth had been but slowly appreciated even at the South, and that the North still clung to its old errors; but that, after all, these facts were not surprising, since mankind had been slow to accept even such discoveries as those of Harvey and Galileo.

Mr. Stephens forgot to mention the trifling circumstance that the Barbary States had long existed on the basis of a physical, philosophical, and moral truth strikingly similar to the one enunciated by himself; and it would have been perhaps a service to his auditors had he utilized, for the purpose of clinching his proposition, the well-known lines of the poet about

. . . . . “The good old plan,  
That they should take who have the power,  
And they should keep who can.”

But such omissions on his part are trifles compared with his service to posterity in so clearly

laying down the principles on which the new Confederacy had been established. Mr. Davis had, in the quotation I have just made, laid down the only principles on which it could be maintained; and I contend that the delegates at Montgomery, who were to inaugurate the new government, could not have filled the executive positions at their disposal in a more fitting manner. But the angels in heaven must have wept when they beheld the fortunes of millions of brave men, gentle women, and innocent children, committed to the keeping of such idealistic statesmen.

Time will not permit me to follow the fortunes of Mr. Davis's administration in any detail; and, as I have before explained, it would be impossible to do it thoroughly in the absence of materials. Some day it will have to be done by the Southern historian, who will address the Muse of History as *Æneas* did *Dido*: —

*Infandum, regina, jubes renovare dolorem.*

Now a few words will be sufficient.

Like his namesake the Sage of Monticello, Davis did not have executive ability of the highest order; his statesmanship was based on the idea rather than on the fact. Like Jefferson, he built up a power that was almost dictatorial, which he was doomed to see crumble rapidly away. Like Jefferson, he was sensitive to criticism, and got a

great deal of it — most of it captious. Like Jefferson, he tried to carry on war by means of measures more suitable to peace ; like Jefferson, he clung to incapable favorites ; like Jefferson, he had at heart the interests of the people. But alas ! unlike Jefferson, he had his eyes on the past instead of on the future : the idea for which he struggled was negative rather than positive, and so his place is with the failures of history.

But Davis was not the cause of the downfall of his government, although he was plainly responsible for many of its mistakes. He gathered about him a Cabinet of hardly respectable ability, but then the South had no statesmen with which to furnish him a better. He dominated his Congress, yet its deliberations would have been of little value had it been perfectly independent. He interfered in military matters, showed prejudice toward generals like Joseph E. Johnston, and irritated large numbers of people ; but the battle of Gettysburg or some similar conflict would have seen the culmination of Confederate military success, had Mr. Davis never appeared on a battlefield, suggested a movement of troops, or ordered a change of commanders.

Davis might have taken not the least step calculated to excite the wrath of even such a captious critic as John M. Daniel of the *Richmond Examiner*, yet the result could not have varied appreciably.



The Southern Confederacy was bound to fall, because it had been founded, precisely as Alexander H. Stephens had claimed, upon slavery as its cornerstone.

But if Mr. Davis's mistakes did not cause his government's downfall, and if his possession of all statesmanlike virtues and capacities would not have sufficed for its successful establishment, it is still well, in considering the character of the man, to remember that he endeavored, so far as he could, to inspire his people; that he set his face against barbarity in the conduct of the war; that he was not responsible for the sufferings of Northern prisoners; and that on the whole he maintained his own dignity and self-respect under ordeals that would have crushed less resolute and sincere men.

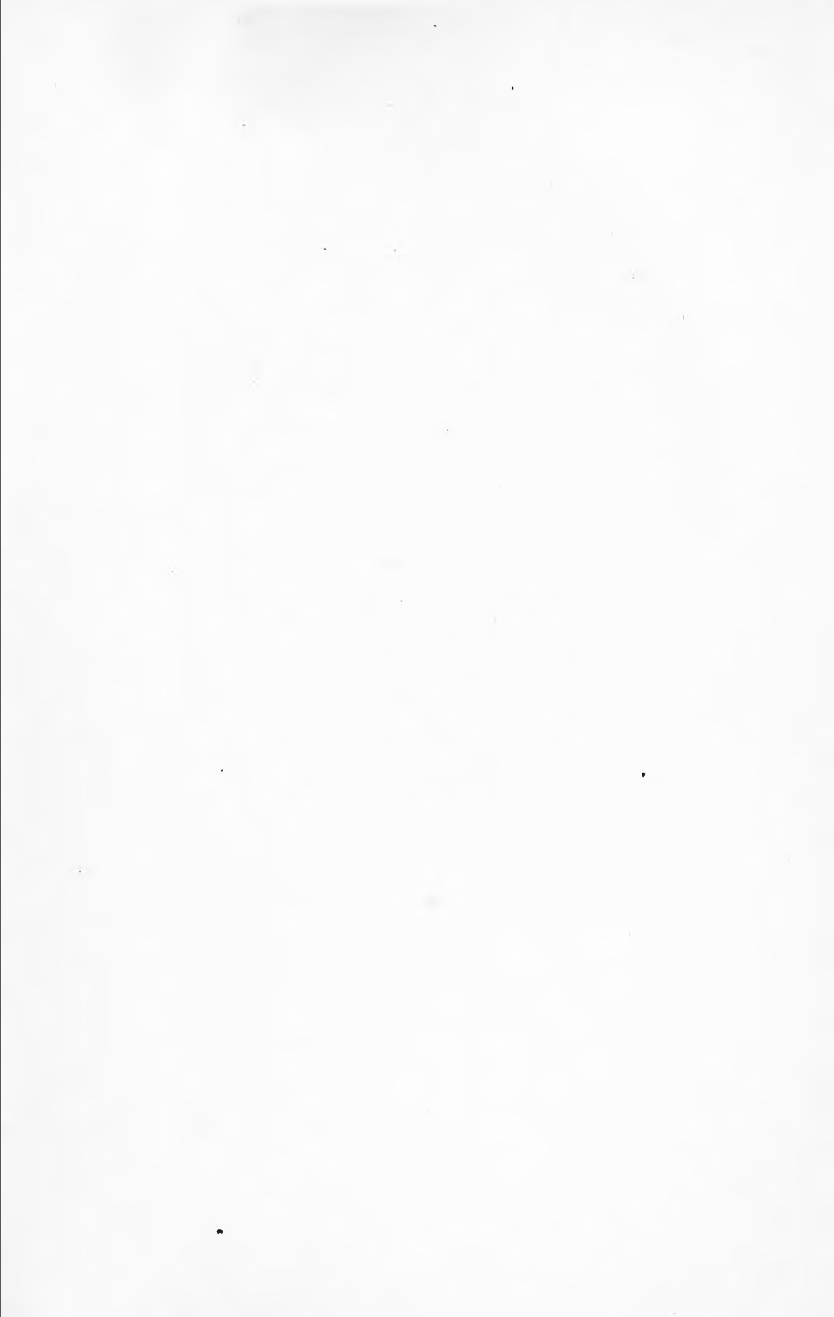
"He nothing common did or mean  
Upon that memorable scene."

He went down with his cause, and he was steadfast to it until his death. He was never pardoned; and I for one cannot find it in my heart to wish that he had sued for the restitution of his rights as a citizen. Jefferson Davis lost his imaginary country at Appomattox, just where the new generation of Southerners have found a real one. For him to have been reconstructed after the four long years of hopes deferred and frustrated, after the weary months of imprisonment, after the un-

necessary indignity of the shackles upon his enfeebled limbs,<sup>1</sup> might have illustrated what the theologian calls a change of heart, but would have introduced into the tragedy of his life an element which the historian of artistic sensibilities and critical acumen would have felt and known to be bathos.

<sup>1</sup> For this cruelty of treatment, which is sometimes denied, see Craven's "Prison Life of Jefferson Davis," New York, 1866.





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